

Late Antique Aesthetics, Chromophobia, and the Red Monastery, Sohag, Egypt¹

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Late antique monastics carefully structured their way of life, and in so doing generated considerable material evidence, particularly in Egypt, due to the excellent conditions for preservation there. They left varied physical traces behind, ranging from graffiti scratched onto the walls of pagan tombs, to expertly bound and illuminated texts, to monumental, purpose-built churches. Those in pursuit of the *bios angelikos*, or angelic life, chose both to adapt preexisting spaces for their struggles, and to build completely new ones². They embellished some of these environments solely with roughly marked out crosses. Others, they ornamented elaborately, participating in the varied and colorful visual culture of late antiquity³.

One of the most lavishly decorated of the surviving late antique churches in Egypt has been largely overlooked by scholars⁴. It belongs to the so-called Red Monastery, or Monastery of St Bishay (Bishoi), near Sohag, in Upper Egypt. Its trilobed sanctuary includes well-preserved paintings with figural subjects, and also with patterns that stretch around columns and along walls, enliven capitals with colored accents, and unsettle our sense of architectural propriety (Pls 1-2)⁵.

These paintings have acquired layers of dirt and varnish over the centuries, and have also begun to detach from the walls. Due to conservation work begun in 2002 in this church, making the paintings

Stephen Zwirn, and I thank them for their generosity. I am also very grateful to Dumbarton Oaks, Temple University, and the J. William Fulbright Commission for their support. All conservation and scholarly work on this project between December 2002 and April 2006 has been funded by the United States Agency for International Development, through the Egyptian Antiquities Project of the American Research Center in Egypt, under USAID Grant No. 263-G-00-93-00089-00 (formerly 263-0000-G-00-3089-00). Copyright for all Red Monastery research, photography, studies and documentation carried out during this period belongs to the American Research Center in Egypt. For their support and collaboration, we thank Zahi Hawass, Abdallah Kamel, Magdi al-Ghandour, Abdallah Attar, and Mohammed Abdel Rahim. The members of the Red Monastery Project are grateful to the Coptic Church, and particularly to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Bishop Yohannes, Father Wissa and Father Antonius, for their generous hospitality and dedicated involvement in the project. We thank USAID and ARCE for their exceptional support and assistance, particularly Gerry D. Scott III, Robert K. Vincent Jr., Janie Abdel Aziz, and Madame Amira. We particularly appreciate the collegiality and hard work of Michael Jones, the EAP Project Manager for the Red Monastery Project. See below, note 11, for information about the Red Monastery Project team.

² For a serious and detailed examination of varied monastic habitations, see: Brooks Hedstrom, forthcoming.

³ For a discussion of monastic representation in cells, see: Bolman, forthcoming a.

⁴ We look forward to the important contribution of Karel Innemée, who is continuing work on the Red and White Monasteries begun by Jean Clédat, Jules Leroy and Paul van Moorsel, to be published in the IFAO series *La peinture murale chez les coptes*. The only articles specifically dedicated to the Red Monastery paintings now in print are by Otto Meinardus and Innemée: Meinardus 1969-1970; Meinardus 1974-1975; Meinardus 1981; Innemée 2004. The fundamental study by Ugo Monneret de Villard privileges architecture over painting. Only half a chapter is reserved for "decoration", at the end of volume two. Monneret de Villard 1925-1926, Vol. 2, Ch. 7, 119-135. In the preface he extols the architecture, and does not mention the paintings once. Monneret de Villard 1925-1926, Vol. 1, 9-12. I discuss the historiography of the Red Monastery church paintings at greater length in another article, in progress.

⁵ All photographs are by Patrick Godeau, and copyright for all images is held by the American Research Center in Egypt, unless otherwise noted.

¹ My thanks to Philip Sellew and Sheila McNally for their invitation to participate in one of the best symposia it has ever been my privilege to attend, in March 2003, at the University of Minnesota. I first presented some of the material in this paper at that event: "Living for Eternity: Monasticism in Egypt." I have benefited particularly from discussions with Fabio Barry, Slobodan Ćurčić, Dale Kinney, Jane Evans, Mat Immerzeel, Barbara Kellum, Ann Kuttner, Ioanna Kakoulli, Gertrud van Loon, Thomas Mathews, Cédric Meurice, Thelma Thomas, Maria Vassilaki and



Pl. 1. Detail of the north lobe, middle register, and semidome with the Galaktotrophousa, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)



Pl. 2. Salome, with the broad decorative band framing the north semidome at right, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph E. Ricchi; © ARCE)

clearly visible for the first time in centuries, I have been able to date all of the paintings in the triconch area to late antiquity. In this article, I examine the non-figural architectural polychromy in the original sanctuary, and its considerable significance for our understanding of late antique aesthetics⁶.

A short distance to the west of Sohag the modern visitor can still find not only the Red Monastery church, but a second monumental church as well. These two sites are known under several names. The more famous is the Monastery of St Shenute, often referred to as the White Monastery because of the white limestone out of which its prominent church was built (Pl. 3).

The nearby Red Monastery church is for the most part an architectural imitation of that at the White Monastery, but constructed predominantly in reddish (now light brown) brick, as its name indicates, and on a smaller scale (Pl. 4)⁷. They date to the fifth

⁶ Faint paintings, mostly of crosses, survive in parts of the nave. They do not obviously belong to the sanctuary paintings, and therefore are not considered as part of this study. Additionally, two areas of medieval paintings have survived in the northern side of the church, directly west of the trilobe. My thanks to Innemée for drawing to my attention the fragment on the eastern transverse wall (north side), prior to the trefoil. The faint painting of an equestrian saint survives on the northern wall immediately to the west of the trilobed area. Drawings of the crosses and equestrian are published in Laffrière 1993. Additionally, more than one layer of painting has survived in a small room located in the north-eastern corner of the church. Prior to conservation, these paintings are difficult to date, although at least some of them are certainly late antique. I am publishing my analysis of the figural paintings in the north semidome in another article that is in progress.

⁷ Bricks exposed during conservation, for example when returning a painted fragment misplaced by the Comité to its correct orientation, are bright red.



Pl. 3. White Monastery Church, exterior view (Photograph and © E. Bolman)



Pl. 4. Red Monastery Church, exterior view (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

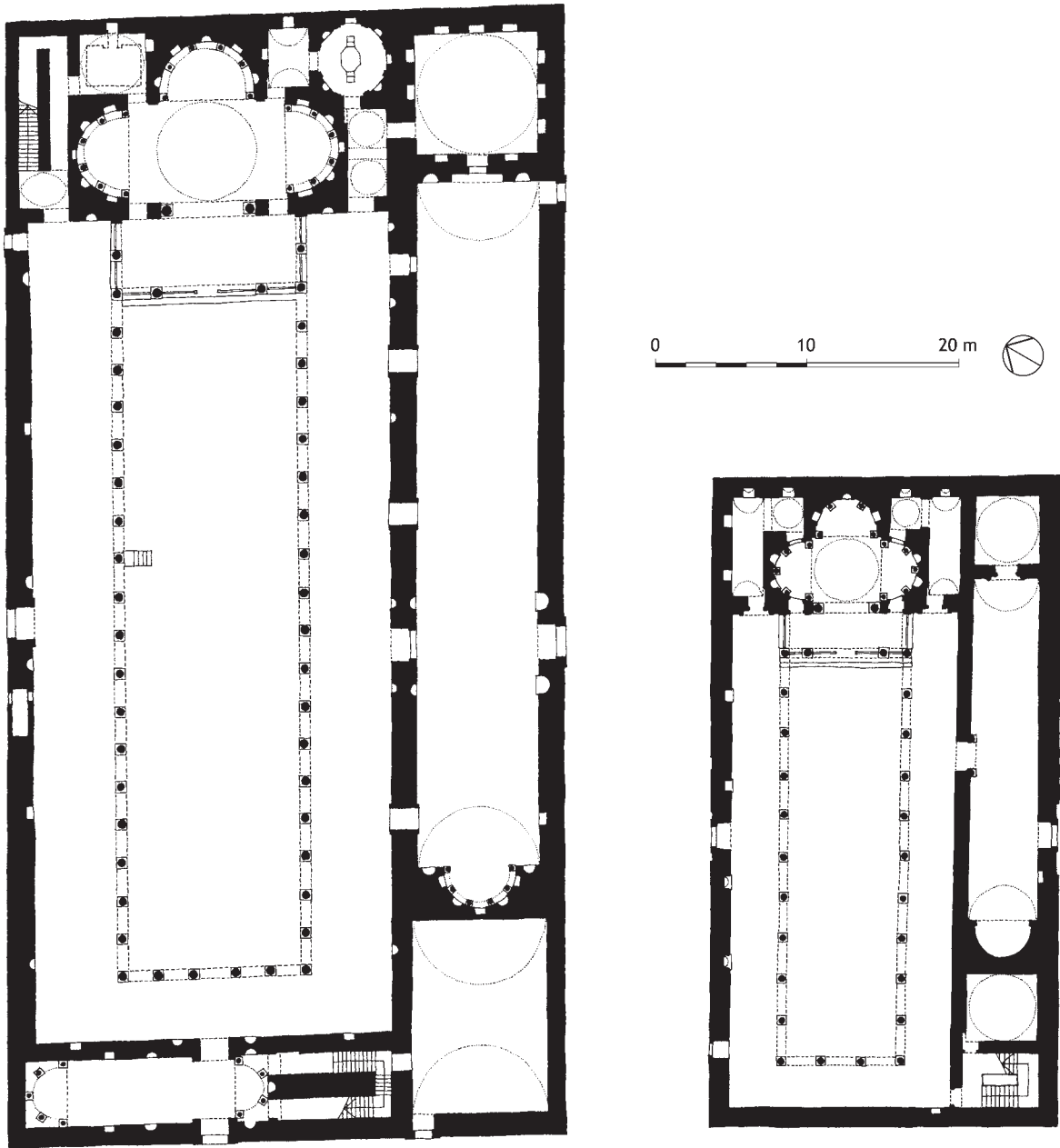


Fig. 1. White and Red Monastery Churches, plans drawn to the same scale.
(Drawing: Nicholas Warner, after a reconstruction by Peter Grossmann)

and sixth centuries, and served a federation of monastic communities⁸. Both churches were built with massive exterior walls, angled slightly inwards, and flared at the top with a cavetto cornice. From

current and thorough source for the architecture of the two churches is: Grossmann 2002, 528-539; and, for the Red Monastery, the article by Grossmann in this volume of ECA: 'Zum dach über dem Ostumgang der Kirche des Bishuyklosters bei Sühāg'. For the Shenoutian federation, see: Layton 2002, 26-27 and n. 9. Hans-Georg Severin has recently redated the Red Monastery church to ca. 525-550 A.D. based on his analysis of the sculpture. My thanks to him for permitting me to read this important contribution in advance of its publication. Severin, forthcoming.

⁸ For orientation to the evidence and history at both sites, and also bibliography, see the entries in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*, by various authors. CE, 736-740, 761-770. The most

RED MONASTERY ✚ SOHAG
CUTAWAY ISOMETRIC OF SANCTUARY

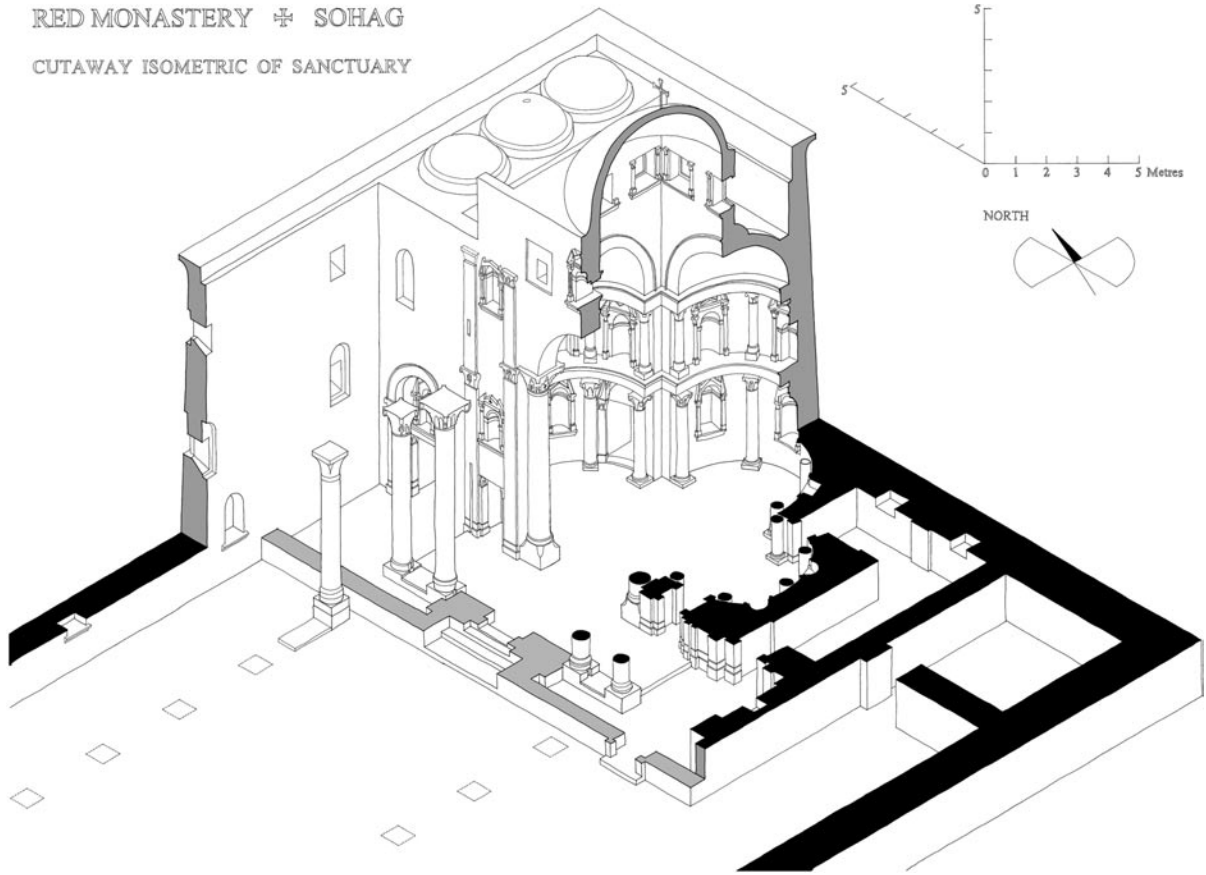


Fig. 2. Isometric view of the Red Monastery church sanctuary, present condition (Drawing: Nicholas Warner)

the outside they look very much like ancient Egyptian temples, but within these walls their architects have constructed basilicas, each with a trefoil sanctuary rendered in the architectural language of the late Roman empire (Fig. 1). We know this type not only from these two sites, but also from other late antique churches, for example one at Dendera (Tentyra), dating to the sixth century⁹.

The trilobed eastern end of the Red Monastery church has survived astonishingly well. This area originally functioned as the sanctuary, but the

monastic community uses the now unroofed nave as a courtyard, and a façade has been constructed between the nave and the eastern end. Within the former sanctuary, only the easternmost of the three lobes is currently screened off and used as the church sanctuary. Each of the three semicircular walls of the original sanctuary includes two tiers of architectural sculpture on top of which rests a large semidome. Various curved or squared niches, framed by pilasters, half-columns and columns, with decorative gables, create strong contrasts of volume, light, shadow, and texture. A modern dome, resting on a clerestory with late antique elements, covers the center of the trefoil (Fig. 2). The late antique fabric of the building consists principally of brick, limestone, plaster and paint, with higher-quality stone used for some columns¹⁰. The artists employed tempera and to a lesser extent encaustic.

The Red Monastery church constitutes the best preserved example of this triconch basilical type in

⁹ Grossmann 2002, 443 – 446, 528 – 536, Figs 63 and 150. Dale Kinney is preparing a study of the Red Monastery church architecture.

¹⁰ A few higher-quality stone columns stand at ground-level in the sanctuary. One remains in the nave, this latter most likely belonging to what Johann Michael Wansleben described in the seventeenth century as a set of nave columns more beautiful than anything in the White Monastery church. Wansleben 1677, 336-337.

Egypt, including as it does high walls and well preserved, original architectural sculpture in the sanctuary. The arrangement of tiers of niches with elaborate architectural framing is common in eastern Mediterranean architecture of this period. However, what the Red Monastery sanctuary has that these other sites lack is a substantial amount of surviving paint (Pl. 5).

THE WALL PAINTING CONSERVATION PROJECT

A project to clean, conserve, study and publish the wall paintings in the Red Monastery church sanctuary was begun under my direction in 2002. Adriano Luzi and Luigi De Cesaris undertook the specialized work of conservation. Since the sad loss of Luzi in 2003, Alberto Sucato has assisted De Cesaris. The United States Agency for International Development and the Egyptian Antiquities Project of the American Research Center in Egypt have funded and administered the work conducted between December 2002 and April 2006¹¹. We greatly appreciate the collaboration of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities in this project. Bishop Yohannes, Father Antonius and the monastic community facilitate site work with their gracious hospitality and support.

Pre-conservation, Ugo Monneret de Villard dated the bust of Patriarch Theophilus, above the eastern door in the northern lobe, to the seventh or eighth century, without commentary or analysis (Pl. 6)¹². Paul van Moorsel and Karel Innemée dated the major apse painting of the north lobe, at a time when it was still obscured by darkened varnish, to 1301 and circa 1300 respectively, based on an inscription elsewhere in the church¹³. Impressively, before cleaning, they observed that three layers of painted plaster existed that predated 1000¹⁴. The non-figural paintings have rarely been mentioned, and never studied¹⁵. After cleaning and conservation of approximately twenty percent of the triconch, it is possible to demonstrate that all of the paintings in this area date to late antiquity. All surfaces in the three lobes of the eastern end were originally covered with paint, including niches, column shafts, capitals, gables, cornices, and interspersed sections of wall. The same is the case for the transverse wall in front of the clover-leaf space¹⁶. Late antique pigment has survived on most of these surfaces, from the floor level through the clerestory.

The evidence of paint and plaster layers has relevance for dating, and the conclusions presented here derive from work on the north lobe only. De Cesaris and Sucato provided all of the information about paint and plaster layers, on which my art historical analyses depend¹⁷. It now seems to be the case that four principal layers of paint were applied in the three apses of the sanctuary, and two on the majority of the walls. The uppermost layer on most of the walls belongs to the third phase of work in the church. Aside from the apse, the only consistent appearance of the fourth paint layer is on the rear walls of the niches, where busts of saints have been repainted¹⁸. The non-figural architectural polychromy of the walls is therefore earlier in date than the major figural compositions of the apses. Elsewhere, I date the painting of the *Galaktotrophousa*, belonging to the fourth and final layer in the north apse, to circa the eighth century¹⁹. The church itself

¹¹ See note 1 for USAID, ARCE and EAP acknowledgments. USAID/EAP supported conservation ended in December 2005, but additional work on the project continued through April 2006. Assistant conservators who worked on the project between 2003-2005 are: Emiliano Abrusca, Emiliano Albanese, Emiliano Antonelli, Chiara Compostella, Ilaria De Martinis, Diego Pistone, Luigi De Prezzo, Chiara Di Marco, Emiliano Ricchi, and Maria Cristina Tomassetti, with specialized assistance from Maria Antonietta Gorini, Domenico Poggi and Sergio Tagliacozzi. Additional team members are: Father Maximous El-Anthony, Paul Dille, Patrick Godeau, Karel Innemée, Dale Kinney, Michelangelo Lupo, Cédric Meurice, Hans-Georg Severin, Peter Sheehan and Nicholas Warner.

¹² Monneret de Villard 1925-1926, Vol. 2, 132.

¹³ Although he did not publish his work on the Red Monastery, Van Moorsel's estimation of the dating of the north semidome to 1301 was included in a dissertation. Langener 1996, 163. Innemée 2004, 1324.

¹⁴ Van Moorsel/Innemée 1997, 70-71.

¹⁵ Monneret de Villard mentioned that all surfaces were covered with painted stucco, but then proceeded to state that it was almost all destroyed as part of the restorations. Oddly, this seems to have happened at the White Monastery, but not at the Red Monastery. Monneret de Villard 1925-1926, Vol. 2, 131. Albert Gayet observed that both sanctuaries were covered with non-figural decoration. Gayet 1902, 151-152.

¹⁶ See note 6 for reference to a surviving medieval fragment on the transverse wall.

¹⁷ These are documented at ARCE in a series of technical reports, and extensive graphic documentation of the conservation work.

¹⁸ Less comprehensive repainting and retouching also occurred elsewhere, as part of the fourth phase of painting. See Bolman, forthcoming b.

¹⁹ This article is in preparation.



Plate 5: General view of the north lobe, from the floor up to the clerestory, and showing the edge of the modern dome. Conservation completed everywhere except sections of the ground floor and clerestory. Sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)



Pl. 6. Patriarch Theophilus, left half conserved. Lunette over eastern door, north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery Church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

has been dated between the late fifth to mid sixth century, and, most recently, Hans Georg Severin has assigned it to the period between 525-550 A.D.²⁰. Therefore, the subject of this article, the visible, non-figural paintings on the walls of the sanctuary, date between circa 525 and 800 A.D. As will be shown later, connections exist between the Red Monastery architectural polychromy and paintings in other Egyptian monasteries that have been dated to the sixth or seventh century, confirming a similar chronological range for these paintings at Sohag. Our knowledge of late antique painting in Egypt is still too limited to permit a more precise dating.

ARCHITECTURAL POLYCHROMY AND THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

The architectural polychromy of the Red Monastery sanctuary has a long pedigree with clear antecedents in Greek and Roman architecture. Ancient Egyptian painted architecture may also be part of its ancestry, but this tradition has not yielded precise

parallels. An impression of the ways paint was used on Greek architecture is perhaps best obtained by considering the Macedonian tombs of the Hellenistic period, such as the one associated with Philip II at Vergina. Its façade replicates the architectural format of a temple front, and includes not only solid areas of color (blue triglyphs) but also a painted, but not sculpted frieze of a hunt²¹. Two large, reclining personages fill the pediment of the Tomb of the Palmettes at Mieza, depicted illusionistically in bright paint, not sculpture²². Color works to embellish three-dimensional elements, and also to replace them. Subjects include figures and patterns.

Greek tombs built in Alexandria for the Ptolemies, and infused in some cases with Egyptian motifs, often included substantial amounts of paint. In addition to paint on the façades of some of these

²⁰ Severin forthcoming. See note 8 for more bibliography.

²¹ Drougou/Saatsoglou-Paliadeli 2002, Figs 60-62.

²² Rhomiopoulou 1997, 30-35.

tombs, a considerable amount covered the interior walls, ceilings and niches of many of them, much of it still visible. Some go well beyond simple decoration. Marjorie Susan Venit has described one particularly elaborate example that includes a double *trompe-l'oeil*, in the Tomb of Sidi Gabr, of circa 200 B.C. 'The ceiling of the kline niche, which is painted to replicate a ceiling composed of painted coffers visible at left and right, is covered with a simulated tent or awning inflated by an invisible breeze.'²³

The Romans integrated color into architecture using various media, including paint, mosaic, and also colored stone. They used these materials to form patterns and also to create figural representations²⁴. The inclination to color architecture gained momentum in the imperial period²⁵. While illusory columns in the architectural fantasies of Roman wall painting far outstrip the decorative scheme of most physical columns, nevertheless numerous examples of paint on architectural elements survive in Pompeian houses. These often consist of solid colors on the lower part of column shafts, cream or white above, and sometimes restrained polychromy on capitals and cornices²⁶. Pliny the Elder criticized

the aesthetic impulses leading to such decoration, writing: 'We are no longer content with panels nor with [wall] surfaces displaying broadly a range of mountains in a bedchamber; we have even begun to paint on the masonry!'²⁷. The Romans commonly evoked faux architectural sculpture with paint, creating illusionistic vistas. Real architectural sculpture and that included in imaginary scenes frequently mimicked expensive materials. But accounting for painted architecture as a simple attempt by those with a limited budget to replicate more expensive views and materials fails as an explanation, because paint was sometimes added to high-quality surfaces in imperial settings. In the Forum of Augustus, the remains of fourteen-meter high white marble panels have been found painted with illusory textile hangings, suggesting that the Romans were playing an aesthetic game²⁸. Surely, if Augustus had wanted actual textiles he could have had them made, no matter how large, so the rationale behind these paintings must be sought elsewhere, perhaps in the demonstration of the painters' skill, in the contrast between what was real and what only apparent, out of playfulness, or as a display of wealth, involving the obscuring with paint of that which was so often imitated in paint. These examples indicate that Romans deployed a flexible and creative attitude towards color and its integration into architectural spaces which is of great relevance to the Red Monastery church.

Art historians writing about Christian sites in late antique Egypt have made disparate references to color, paint, and their relationship to architecture. Marguerite Rassart-Debergh has observed what she calls a *trompe-l'oeil* attitude towards architecture, in the early remains at Kellia. It is expressed, for example, in the juxtaposition of a brick column, covered with stucco and paint to imitate stone, and topped with an actual carved stone capital. She has described the common practice of creating the illusion of porphyry, brightly colored textiles, jewels, mosaics, marble, and other beautiful colored materials within monastic spaces through the use of colored paint²⁹. Analyzing funerary sculpture and its architectural framework, Thelma Thomas has carefully considered color and its effects. 'Both polychromed reliefs and wall-paintings were integral parts of the overall schemes and intended to be seen as such. It is crucial to note the impossibility of determining where the polychromy of architectural relief ends and wall-painting

²³ Venit 2002, 41.

²⁴ Barry 2006; Kelly 1986. Roman tombs offer us some of the best surviving examples of architectural polychromy, e.g. the Tomb of the Pancratii (Via Latina), the Columbaria of Pomponius Hylas, and the Columbaria of Vigna Codini. These are beautifully reproduced in: Della Portella 2000, 68, 70-72, 74-75, 120-127.

²⁵ 'Augustus' forum [was] the first to have been decorated profusely with polychrome marbles.', James 1996, 66; Jones 2003, 22.

²⁶ Some well-preserved examples of painted architectural sculpture have survived at Pompeii, e.g. the Casa dei Capiteili Colorati, and the Casa dei Dioscuri. My thanks to Kellum for these references. A painted column and more elaborately painted square columns at the former site are illustrated in: Cassanelli *et al.* 2002, 162, 213, Figs 116, 178. Examples of columns with color on the lower part of the shaft and capital, and variously on the column base and supporting cornice can be found in the Houses of Ariadne and of the Tragic Poet, illustrated in Cassanelli *et al.* 2002, 102, 128, Figs 47, 76.

²⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XXXV, 2-3 in: Loeb Classical Library 1959, 260-261.

²⁸ For documentation on the painting in the Forum of Augustus, see: Jones 2003, 22-24. Ungaro and Vitali 2003, 217-218. C. Gasparri has observed a decorative transgression of media in Severan-period painting. Gasparri 1970, 32. Cited and translated in Clark 1991, 353.

²⁹ Rassart-Debergh 1998, 29.

begins.³⁰ Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya has noted the importance of color, working with relief sculpture used in the walls of churches such as those found at the Monastery of Apa Apollo, Bawit, 'to accentuate the sumptuousness of the monuments.'³¹

Until recently, Egypt's climate has been exceptionally dry, providing superb conditions for the preservation of paint on architectural sculpture³². Many pharaonic sites still include paint on figural relief sculpture, and on columns, capitals, and the like³³. Numerous examples of painted architectural sculpture from Christian sites can be found in the Coptic Museum, in Cairo³⁴. But even in Egypt, paint on architectural sculpture has often deteriorated, or has been removed.

ARCHITECTURAL POLYCHROMY, THE RED MONASTERY AND CHROMOPHOBIA

Western art and architectural historians have traditionally had something of a love affair with pristine white classical sculpture and architecture, often ignoring the colored paint that embellished both. David Batchelor has framed this attitude not in terms of loving whiteness, but as a manifestation of what he has termed *chromophobia*, a phenomenon that he sees expressed in numerous aspects of modern western culture, and one that has relevance for this study of the Red Monastery church³⁵. The quintessential exemplar of classical purity is the Parthenon, used as a model for numerous buildings. These copies commonly omit the paint that originally decorated this temple, and other buildings in Greece and Rome³⁶. In a publication of 1764, the influential art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) wrote:

*For the essence of beauty consists not in colour but in shape, and on this point enlightened minds will at once agree. As white is the colour which reflects the greatest number of rays of light, and consequently is the most sensitive, a beautiful body will, accordingly, be the more beautiful the whiter it is*³⁷.

And while it was certainly the case in the nineteenth century that many architects and architectural historians began to study evidence of paint at the Parthenon and elsewhere, after excavations at Aegina in 1811 revealed painted temple remains, nevertheless the habit of imagining these monuments as white maintained considerable vigor³⁸.

The desire for whiteness was expressed both in copies of ancient buildings and through the physical transformation of the original surfaces themselves. William St. Clair has recently discovered definitive proof that when the Parthenon sculptures were being prepared for display in the British Museum in 1937-1938, many of them were chiseled and scoured to remove all traces of paint and patina, in an effort to render them completely white³⁹. This approach was not unique. A photograph taken in 1953 shows a Greek "restorer" scraping the patina off of the marble surface of the Hephaesteion in Athens using a steel chisel, as part of a project undertaken by an American, Alison

³⁰ Thomas 1989, 60, and 58-59. See also Thomas 2000.

³¹ Rutschowskaya 1986, 102, my translation.

³² Extensive, year-round irrigation, possible after the construction of the Aswan High Dam, has caused substantial additional humidity in parts of Egypt and also rising ground water levels.

³³ E.g. Karnak, the Mammisi at Edfu, Kom Ombo, and Medinet Habu.

³⁴ For color illustrations, see a book published in the 1990s that is particularly useful for its collection of objects reproduced in color, although not for its text: Atalla n.d., e.g. 53 (top), 75 (all), 79 (top), 80, 83 (all), 92 (top and bottom) 96, 104 (top).

³⁵ Batchelor 2000.

³⁶ Phoca/Valavanis 1999, 94-95. Varied reconstructions of paint on the Parthenon are illustrated in color, for example some in: Tournikiotis 1994a, e.g. 264, 275. The following examples of classical buildings (often evoking the Parthenon) created white are illustrated in: Tournikiotis 1994b: the Custom House, Wall Street, New York City (p. 216); the house at Berry Hill, near Halifax, Virginia (p. 219); the Patent Office, Washington, D.C. (p. 218); and the Second Bank of the United States, Philadelphia (p. 213). These monuments span the nineteenth century.

³⁷ 'Da nun die weisse Farbe diejenige ist, welche die mehresten Lichtstrahlen zurückschicket, folglich sich empfindlicher machete: so wird auch ein schöner Körper desto schöner sein, je weisser er ist...' Winckelmann 1764, cited and translated in: St. Clair 1998, 290.

³⁸ Writing about the Western reception of the Elgin marbles William St. Clair observed: 'From the beginning some viewers were uncomfortable with what they saw. Ancient marble statues had been white, western Europe had come to believe over the centuries since the time of the Renaissance, and modern sculptures should be the same.' St. Clair 1998, 289. For a historical overview of the people who engaged with the subject of color in ancient Greek architecture, see: Van Zanten 1994, 260-277. Nadolny shows that the direct study of works of art and architecture began even before the Aegina discoveries. Nadolny 2003. See also n. 35.

³⁹ St. Clair 1998, 281-313, esp. 295-296.

Frantz⁴⁰. General studies of classical architecture still tend to give the subject of architectural polychromy short shrift, and those devoted to painting usually focus on images on flat walls and sometimes raised stucco⁴¹. While specialized publications on ancient architectural polychromy certainly exist, and are currently increasing in number, the topic of non-figural painting on architecture and architectural sculpture seems to be something of a blind spot,

even today⁴². One salient mode for the reception of classical art and architecture views it through glasses that bleach it of all color.

William MacDonald, who did not follow the *chromophobic* trend, suggested a factor that may have contributed to it. He noted that ‘the lack of a complete ensemble [of marble, stucco, mosaic or paint within a standing architectural structure] makes it necessary to consider these techniques and materials separately.’⁴³ But rather than leave such considerations out of his study of Roman architecture, he identified a primary site for the use of color, vault decoration, and captured both its essential effect and the rarity of its survival. ‘What resulted was a shell of color, fitted around inside the architectural space... Imagination is required to recreate this effect in the mind’s eye...’⁴⁴.

The specter of *chromophobia* arises in the historiography and conservation of the White and Red Monasteries. The greater popularity of the White Monastery in Egypt today and in the works of historians may plausibly be attributed to that prolific writer and famous monastic leader, Shenoute of Atripe (346-465), once abbot of the White Monastery. We know of no parallel to him associated with the Red Monastery, and indeed Bentley Layton has identified the latter as belonging to a large federation, under Shenoute’s control⁴⁵. And yet one would think that art and architectural historians would have paid at least as much attention to the Red Monastery church as to that at the White Monastery, but this has not been the case⁴⁶. Not only does its original architecture survive to a much higher level than that of most late antique churches in Egypt, but additionally the sanctuary of the Red Monastery church preserves *in situ* more extensive sculpture and painting than does any late antique monument in Egypt⁴⁷. And yet, expressing a common attitude, Otto Meinardus wrote: ‘For obvious reasons, however, the White Monastery has attracted considerably more ecclesiastical and scholarly attention than its sister monastery, the Red Monastery, which is situated three kilometers north of it.’⁴⁸. The ‘obviousness’ of this situation is not apparent to me. Certainly another factor accounting for this disparity is the higher esteem in which stone architecture is held by traditional architectural historians, compared to brick. But I think another important element is the very whiteness of the “White Monastery” church, and the, by contrast, shockingly dense and intensely patterned paintings

⁴⁰ Alberge 1999; Jury 1999, 10.

⁴¹ John B. Ward-Perkins referred to “effects of light and color” in the Parthenon, but did not elaborate on the subject of color. He mentioned colored marbles, mosaics and painted columns in passing, without commenting on the role of color in the architectural space. Ward-Perkins 1981, 116-118, 120. Color is clearly not a ‘principle of Roman architecture,’ according to Mark Wilson Jones, whose recent book includes one page and one caption on color. It may include another paragraph or two, but some of the page references in the index under the term “polychromy” are incorrect (pages 124 and 194-195 do not include a discussion of the subject). Jones 2000, Caption 5.1, 87, 196.

⁴² Two of the most exciting recent publications are: Bankel, Liverani, *et al.* 2004, and Brinkmann (ed.) 2003. My thanks to Niels Gaul for buying a copy of this second, rare, volume for me.

⁴³ MacDonald 1965, 172.

⁴⁴ MacDonald 1965, 174.

⁴⁵ Layton 2002, 26-27, and n. 9.

⁴⁶ The neighboring White Monastery has received considerably more attention, but even it appears only very rarely, except in publications of specifically Egyptian art and architecture. For a demonstration of preference for the White Monastery over the Red, compare the attention paid to the two in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*. Five pages are devoted to the Red Monastery, and ten to the White Monastery. *CE*, 736-740, 761-770.

⁴⁷ Severin has evaluated the White and Red Monastery sculpture in the following terms. ‘The rich original architectural sculpture of the White Monastery is indeed preserved only in a very reduced state, due to the collapse of parts of the sanctuary in the early middle ages, to the following restorations and to further damage – a very reduced state of preservation from which it is hard to evaluate the past splendour and variety. On the other hand, the architectural sculpture of the Red Monastery – at least in the sanctuary and its [the sanctuary’s] western facade – is preserved to a unique degree. Nowhere else in Egypt do we know a monument of the Late Antique and Early Byzantine period whose architectural sculpture is *in situ* up to the highest level of the building and can reliably be examined and estimated.’ Severin 2004, 1. Once uncovered from their obscuring, later layers of unpainted plaster, the extent of the late antique paintings in the Church of the Virgin at the so-called Syrian Monastery (Wadi Natrun) may rival that of those in the Red Monastery sanctuary. Innemée is directing the Syrian Monastery work.

⁴⁸ Meinardus 1969-1970, 111.



Pl. 7. Niche with painted cross and sculpted shell, lower half built into the medieval roof. Current location, roof, White Monastery church (Photograph and © E. Bolman)



Pl. 8. Niche with a band of late antique paint immediately below the sculpted conch, northern nave wall, far western end, White Monastery church (Photograph and © E. Bolman)

in the Red Monastery sanctuary. And yet this absence of color at the White Monastery church is not, at least for the interior, historically accurate. As recently as 1900 substantial areas of colored paint survived. Albert Gayet described non-figural and figural paintings covering the interior of the White Monastery sanctuary, in a publication of 1902⁴⁹. All but fragments of the non-figural paintings and their plaster layers have since been removed, and only some of the figural paintings have escaped destruction. One unusual survival is now accessible only by the roof, where one can see the upper half of a late antique painted and sculpted niche, the lower half of which was built into the medieval roof (Pl. 7)⁵⁰. Most have even less of their original painted skin than a niche in the nave, in which a late antique painted band in yellow and pink survives immediately below the conch (Pl. 8). A recent survey has yielded evidence for two late antique painted layers, and additional medieval plaster and

paint throughout the church⁵¹. It seems apparent that this *chromophobic* whitening (i.e. removal of painted plaster) was done by the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, which undertook considerable work at both churches in

⁴⁹ Gayet 1902, 145-146, 150-151.

⁵⁰ The painting of the upper half of a cross seems to me to be somewhat later than late antiquity, and may date to circa the tenth century, although this is a very preliminary guess.

⁵¹ In March and April 2006, the following team conducted a survey of the White Monastery church for remnants of paintings: Bolman, Louise Blanke, Cédric Meurice, Gillian Pyke, and Sheehan. We found traces of late antique and medieval painted plaster throughout the church, particularly in the easternmost lobe, and in part of two niches now accessible only via the roof. Our profound thanks to the Antiquities Endowment Fund of ARCE for funding this work. An article is in progress.

the early part of the twentieth century⁵². Monneret de Villard's 1925-1926 publication shows the White Monastery church sanctuary without the patterned plaster that Gayet had observed in it a few decades previously⁵³. Most likely, its removal was undertaken, as was the case with the Parthenon sculpture, in a misguided effort to return the monument to an imagined original state of white purity. The aesthetic preference for a colorless austerity may well account for the fact that the remarkable architectural polychromy of the Red Monastery

church has thus far escaped art historical recognition and analysis⁵⁴.

NON-FIGURAL ARCHITECTURAL POLYCHROMY IN THE RED MONASTERY SANCTUARY

The repertoire of motifs used in the Red Monastery sanctuary on the architectural sculpture and the walls draws on a long tradition, and transforms it. Some of the abstract patterns in the Red Monastery wall paintings repeat designs that had been current in floor mosaics for some time. A section of wall between two niches in the middle register of the eastern lobe (Pl. 9) repeats not only the pattern, but also the basic color scheme of a circa third-century A.D. floor mosaic in Antioch⁵⁵. In late antiquity the same design and coloration appear in barrel vaulted ceiling mosaics in the Rotunda of St. George, Thessaloniki⁵⁶. Other sections of paint imitate the much more expensive use of colored marbles, granites, and porphyry in Roman architecture, for example the panels to either side of the central niche, in the middle register of the eastern lobe (Pl. 10). Similar painted examples embellished one of the Greco-Roman tombs at Hermopolis Magna⁵⁷.

The rosette motif, a fully opened rose with a thin foliate "x" separating four large pink and red petals, adorns sections of the wall on the lowest level of the easternmost lobe. With a white center, it also appears on some of the painted curtains hanging in several niches (Pl. 11). Associated in antiquity with springtime, as Henry Maguire has shown, the rosette appears on countless late antique textiles and floor mosaics, both pagan and Christian⁵⁸. For example, a mosaic band decorated with rosettes and cornucopias culminates in the Christogram of the eastern apse soffit, in the sixth-century A.D. Church of San Vitale, at Ravenna⁵⁹.

Many close parallels exist between other monastic paintings from late antique Egypt and those at the Red Monastery, and some of these also have classical antecedents. Lozenges set within rectangles decorate the ceilings of the Alexandrian Anfushy tombs I and V⁶⁰. A circle set within a lozenge that is in turn framed by a long rectangle appears in the Antioch mosaics⁶¹. This configuration, with slight variations in proportion and decorative detail, is painted on the transverse wall fronting the sanctuary, at the Red Monastery (Pl. 12), in a tomb at Hermopolis Magna, and in chapel XXVIII and room six at Bawit⁶². Examples of a dappled background

⁵² Some of this work is documented in the following publications: *Comité* 1909, 60. *Comité* 1940, 267, 370. El-Habashi 2001-2002. Meurice is currently working on a publication of the Comité's role at both monasteries.

⁵³ Monneret de Villard 1925-1926, vol. 1, Pl. 11-17, 31, vol. 2, Pl. 173. In these views some plaster is still visible on the medieval brickwork, but it is not apparently patterned. In vol. 2, Pl. 169-170 one can see part of the brick with a coating of plaster that filled in the lobes of the church prior to the Comité's renovations. Pls 205-207, vol. 2, shows a watercolor by Clédât of some of the medieval figures painted on the plastered brick, in the south lobe. Meurice is working on this subject, with unpublished archival materials. One band of patterned paint on a cornice at the northern end of the narthex survived until recently. It is visible in Monneret de Villard 1925-1926, vol. 1, Pls 18, 20. Caroline Schroeder was also able to photograph it in 1999. Schroeder 2004, Fig. 4. The area has since been filled with steel supports, damaging and obscuring most of the painted surface.

⁵⁴ I base this assertion on published material, and do not know what the scope of Innemée's forthcoming volume will be.

⁵⁵ For a black and white illustration of the floor mosaic, and a description of its colors, see: Campbell 1988, 25, Pl. 77.

⁵⁶ Two panels using variations of this design, from the barrel vaults around the central domed space, are illustrated in: Papachatzis n.d., 54-55. These two do not have the same colors as the Red Monastery example, but another one does, which I photographed in 1999.

⁵⁷ Gabra/Drioton 1954, Pl. 21.

⁵⁸ Maguire 1987, 13, 36, 77, Figs 42, 44-47 (Heraklea Lynkestis, large basilica, floor mosaic), Figs 89-90 (San Vitale, Ravenna). A fifth-century textile example of a rosette in a tree of life is in Fribourg. Stauffer 1991, 132, cat. no. 49, Pl. V. For rosettes used in a Christian context, that were intended to have an off-white center (now yellowed), see a textile with a gemmed cross in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts inv. 83.126, illustrated in Friedman 1989, Pl. 21, 214.

⁵⁹ Maguire 1987, 77, Fig. 89.

⁶⁰ Venit 2002, Pls I, III.

⁶¹ Campbell 1988, Pls 213-214.

⁶² House 4, Hermopolis Magna: Gabra/Drioton 1954, Pls 8-9. Chapel XXVIII, west wall, Bawit. Clédât 1904, Pl. CV. Salle 6, Bawit: Maspéro/Drioton 1943, Pls XVIIIB, XVIIIb.



Pl. 9. Detail of a pattern to the left of the southernmost niche (third from the left), unconserved. Middle register, eastern lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)



Pl. 10. Central niche, unconserved. Middle register, eastern lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)



Pl. 11. Niche with a painted curtain, conserved test cleaning with edges of the still unconserved wall showing. Northernmost niche (first from the left), middle register, eastern lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)



Pl. 12. Painted rectangle enfaming a lozenge and circle, unconserved. Eastern face of the transverse wall fronting the trilobe, southern side. Sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

pattern were painted at Hermopolis Magna, Bawit (Pl. 13), the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah at Saqqara, and the Red Monastery (Pl. 14)⁶³. Perhaps the painters used this technique to evoke a sense of the speckled quality of many colored stones, such as porphyry and red granite. Plates 13 and 14 also both employ variants of the interlaced square (eight-pointed star) motif common in the late antique eastern Mediterranean, and associated by Andreas Schmidt-Colinet in Christian contexts with a cosmological significance⁶⁴. Two-dimensional patterns of wildly curling vines are also frequently found in Roman mosaics, and they appear at Bawit and at the Red Monastery. In the two monastic examples, the vines frame niche heads⁶⁵.

In late antiquity, Christians adapted the hypostyle hall of Thutmosis III, at Karnak, making it a church. A French conservation team has dated these renovations to the seventh century⁶⁶. Figural and decorative paintings assisted in the transformation of this temple into a church, including several braid motifs encircling columns immediately below the capitals, with very close parallels to those at the Red Monastery (Pls 15-16). Artists also employed them at Saqqara and Bawit⁶⁷. Borders in the Rabbula Gospels, illuminated in Syria in 586 A.D., include multicolored braid motifs as well⁶⁸.

The significance of the non-figural Red Monastery paintings lies in the fact that they comprise the most complete example of monumental painted architectural sculpture surviving from late antiquity, within and also, to the best of my knowledge, outside of Egypt. They are a late example of what was a common practice, for which we generally have very fragmentary evidence, and they utilize motifs common in the larger Mediterranean realm. Extensive late antique monastic remains at Bawit, Saqqara, and the



Pl. 13. *Interlaced squares against a speckled background. East wall, North Church, Monastery of Apa Apollo, Bawit. (Clédat 1999, 214, Fig. 202; © Musée du Louvre)*



Pl. 14. *Interlaced squares with speckled green and pink backgrounds, conserved square showing uncleared wall (left and right), and conserved cornice forming the bottom frame of a niche (above). Lower register, north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)*

⁶³ For Hermopolis Magna: Gabra/Drioton 1954, Pl. 9. For Saqqara: Van Moorsel and Huijbers 1981, Pl. F; see also Pls XIId, XIIIa-c.

⁶⁴ Schmidt-Colinet 1991, 21-34.

⁶⁵ One Roman example is an "Acanthus foliage populated with birds," Peristyle, House of Protomes, now in the Bardo Museum, Tunisia, and reproduced in: Blanchard-Lemée *et al.* 1996, 272, Fig. 213. Red Monastery, north lobe, lowest zone. Bawit, salle 1, east wall: Maspéro/Drioton 1943, fasc. 2, Pls V – VII.

⁶⁶ Le Fur 1994, 114.

⁶⁷ Saqqara: Cell 708. Van Moorsel/Huijbers 1981, Pl. XIIa. Bawit: room 25bis, Maspéro 1943, fasc. 2, Pl. XL.

⁶⁸ *Rabbula Gospels*. Cecchelli/Furlani/Salmi 1959, fol. 2b.



Pl. 15. Late antique painted braid motif, immediately below a capital with intact Pharaonic architectural polychromy. Hypostyle Hall of Thutmosis III, Karnak (Photograph and © E. Bolman)

so-called Syrian Monastery in the Wadi al-Natrun (Scetis) also attest to this intensely colored and patterned style. An early exception to it has survived, however, at Kellis, in the Dakhleh Oasis (Western desert), where the interior walls and columns of the earliest purpose-built church known in Egypt are painted white⁶⁹.

The tradition of architectural polychromy certainly did not remain static over the centuries, and one major contrast between the Macedonian *exempla* and this late antique church interior is the density and variety of coverage. While substantial unpainted areas exist on the façades and in the interiors of the Macedonian tombs, in the Red Monastery sanctuary paint apparently covered

⁶⁹ Bowen, 2002. This church is architecturally simple, and does not have Roman sculptural elements.



Pl. 16. Architectural polychromy with braids (wall), twisted rope (arches) faux green marble (central column), etc. Middle register showing parts of the third and fourth niches (eastern half of the register), north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

every surface⁷⁰. At Pompeii, columns were usually painted with solid areas of color, and sometimes sections of walls were as well, and at the Red Monastery varied flamboyant designs stretch around and across all of them⁷¹. Even the column shafts painted to imitate colored marble include bands in other colors, for example two columns in the northern lobe rendered as green-veined marble, which are embellished at top, center and bottom with brightly contrasting yellow and pink bands (Pls 17-18). No solid blocks of undecorated late antique paint exist anywhere in the sanctuary.

In addition to their significance as a rare survival of the practice of painting architectural sculpture, the ensemble in the Red Monastery sanctuary also informs us as an expression of late antique aesthetics⁷². The patterns, colors, and dense visual juxtapositions in these paintings have parallels, some identical, in other media in the same general period, as discussed above. In some cases, they express a playful attitude towards materials echoing that found in the double *trompe-l'oeil* of the Sidi Gabr tomb, or Augustus' illusory curtain. For example, the fanciful twisted ropes and braids that commonly form arcades in late antique textiles have also been painted onto actual arches in the Red Monastery church, and on the flanking walls (Pl. 16)⁷³. The textiles engage in a visual game, in which the pliable, three-dimensional, twisted yarn of a braid is actually made out of a two-dimensional weaving,

that depicts a three-dimensional solid architectural support. In the Red Monastery architectural example, the soft twisted rope decorates an actual arch, and braids cover adjacent walls, undermining our sense of their solidity. Braids are fundamentally anti-architectonic. Unlike curtains, they have no normal function in architectural spaces. Soft architectural structures, such as tents, require fabric and rope, but large, elaborate colored braids are a standard part of neither soft nor hard architectural environments. These are not the only features that would have destabilized the building for the original viewer. Patterns commonly found in mosaics on floors appear in painted form, on walls. And long-standing habits of imitating expensive materials are also repeated here. What appear at first sight to be panels of inlaid porphyry turn out to be skillful illusions. The fanciful decoration of architectural elements exists in renderings in other media (e.g. textiles showing arches of twisted rope) and on the actual building, at the Red Monastery. In the flickering light of lamps, the material of the illusionistically painted curtains would likely also have been difficult to ascertain.

These paintings participate in a late antique aesthetic that crossed media, and made visual and verbal games out of color, pattern, material and scale. Michael Roberts has identified a delight in opposition expressed in late antique poetry that is established through the use of contrasts, such as height and depth, or wet and dry⁷⁴. He has also described a preference for variety and color expressed with words and also visual media, which he termed the 'jeweled style.' Roberts observed that 'late antique taste did not tolerate the plain and the unadorned; brilliance of effect, the play of contrasting colors, is all.'⁷⁵ Liz James has identified a similar interest in complex colors:

*Gregory of Nyssa demonstrates a delight in the combination of colours and in translucent beauty and natural beauty which seems conceived primarily in terms of colour: 'the river glows like a ribbon on gold drawn through the deep purple of its banks.' Chief among the qualities of beauty for Gregory are variegated colours apprehended through sight, the highest sense. Simple colours are also beautiful, but he values them especially in combination: 'blue is interwoven with violet and scarlet mingled with white and among them are woven threads of gold; the variety of colours shine with a remarkable beauty.'*⁷⁶

⁷⁰ The ceiling no longer survives, and we have not yet explored the floor. My assumption is that the ceiling was painted, but I have no evidence for this assertion other than the complete covering of the walls in late antiquity.

⁷¹ Much work still needs to be done to consider the relationship of the Red Monastery paintings and their Roman antecedents, for example those at Pompeii. One densely patterned and colored column that contradicts my generalization about solid colors on such architectural features was reproduced in a painting by Vincenzo Loria. It is from the Villa of the Columns, Pompeii. Cassanelli 2002.

⁷² Some aspects of this aesthetic have their roots in classical antiquity, e.g. the use of painted ribbons in floor mosaics and wall paintings. For a Roman example see the Villa di Poppea, Oplontis, room 31, in: Laken 2001, Pl. LIX, Fig. 4.

⁷³ Numerous examples of this device can be found, and two are illustrated in: Rutschowskaya 1990, 83-85, 87.

⁷⁴ Roberts 1989, 16-21.

⁷⁵ Roberts 1989, 118.

⁷⁶ James 1996, 125. First quotation: Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter*, 20, PG 46, 1081A. For additional references to this passage see James 1996, 125, n. 3. Second quotation: Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, 194, PG, 44, 389D-391A.



Pl. 17. Veined marble column and two niches with Saints Besa (left) and Shenoute (right). Black uncleaned square on the central column shows condition before conservation. Western half of the middle register, north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

Thomas has explored the extravagance of this late antique aesthetic, and also the playful approach to media, in a revealing study of a textile fragment. She included the following quotation from the fourth-century Cappadocian Bishop Asterius of Amaseia in her essay. Objecting to the wearing of dramatically colored silk textiles, he wrote: 'When they come out in public, dressed in this fashion, they appear like painted walls to those they meet.'⁷⁷ Thomas insightfully observed that the "jeweled style"... is an aesthetic of adornment that revels in polychromatic juxtapositions and contrasts which seek to outdo as much as to replicate effects seen in the natural world.'⁷⁸

These observations certainly resonate when looking at the interior of the Red Monastery church, particularly the preference for densely packed patterns and colors. Twenty-two different combinations enliven a single niche (middle zone, third from the left, north lobe; Pl. 18).⁷⁹ Organized reversals add to the variation, both plastic and painted. Two rounded niches frame the row at either end, while the two central niches have squared backs. The curve of the outer set of niches manifests itself in reverse, in the attached half-columns that frame these niches. Pilasters similarly express the angularity of the central pair. The faux green pilasters and real pink pilasters of the niche shown in Pl. 18 are reversed in the niche to the left, where the illusory pair are pink and the three-dimensional pair are green (see Pl. 17, niche at right, for the color rever-

sal). Post-conservation, no doubt more subtle relationships will be apparent, on a larger scale. But already, with its painted braids, floor patterns shown on walls, and *trompe-l'oeil* features, the artists responsible for this church show themselves to be engaging in a discourse expressed visually and textually that spans the late antique world⁸⁰. Boundaries between media, even those as apparently disparate as painting, architecture, mosaics, textiles, poetry and prose, are everywhere transgressed⁸¹. Simple colors were good, complex coloristic interactions were infinitely better, and patterns were used to facilitate not only complicated interactions of color, but also to increase exponentially the variety of visual stimuli.

The survival of an almost completely painted interior from late antiquity provides opportunities to consider not only the character of Christian and more specifically monastic art in Egypt, but also the surprising visual density and plastic richness of this late example of the classical tradition (Pl. 19). It remains to be seen what ties this aesthetic system has to Pharaonic painted architecture, but the late antique mosaic interiors at Ravenna demonstrate no diminution of vibrancy, pattern and color, sometimes using the same motifs, indicating that the principal genealogy to which they and the Red Monastery painted program belong is the classical. The sanctuary at the Red Monastery enables us to experience the richness and variety of hue as well as pattern, of figural as well as non-representational painting. We can identify visual games, cueing the viewer to think about different media, and questioning the solidity as well as the fabric of the architectural elements. We are not forced through an absence of painted evidence cautiously (*chromophobically*) to imagine an architecture of pristine whiteness, with perhaps restrained areas of color, but are able to see the built up density of color and design that create a continuous, flamboyant internal skin within what is already a complex architectural space. With its painted architectural sculpture, this monument points back to the classical world, expresses the aesthetic preference for colored variety characteristic of late antiquity, and also directs our attention forward to Byzantium, where a delight in what James has called 'chromatic diversity' is characteristic of the middle Byzantine period⁸². It represents the high end of monastic visual culture, although not the highest, because of its inexpensive materials. Interestingly, this confident expression of late

⁷⁷ Asterius of Amaseia, *Homily I*. PG 40, 165-168. Thomas 2002, 42. Thomas uses Cyril Mango's translation. Mango 1972, 50.

⁷⁸ Thomas 2002, 39.

⁷⁹ This is the niche in the north lobe, middle register, third from the left.

⁸⁰ For more on the ties between this decorative program and those of other late antique monuments, see another article on this church, which I am in the process of writing.

⁸¹ On the parallelism between linguistic and visual arts, Roberts notes: 'There is scarcely a stylistic technique identified in the second chapter that does not find an analogy in the visual arts of the period.' Roberts 1989, 118. His book contains sustained demonstrations of this point.

⁸² For the Byzantine material, see James 1996, esp. Ch. 6. The phrase 'chromatic diversity' appears on p. 114, and is expressed by such authors as Rhodios and Mesarites. For a consideration of architectural polychromy in the middle Byzantine period, see: Altripp 2002, 259-270, Pls 1-2. For an exploration of architectural polychromy in medieval Spain, see: Katz 2002, 3-13, Pls 1-3.



Pl. 18. Niche with unidentified saint and architectural polychromy. Third from the left, middle register, north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)



Pl. 19. General view of the second through fourth niches. Middle register, north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

antique aesthetics exists in remote Upper Egypt. More costly renditions would likely have existed as cathedral and patriarchal churches in urban environments. Nevertheless, through the Red Monastery church sanctuary, one can obtain a glimpse of the thousands of lost churches of late antiquity, within Egypt and beyond⁸³.

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⁸³ My thanks to Roger Bagnall for information about the numbers of churches in Egypt by the sixth century, in an email message written August 24, 2004.

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An Illustrated Aristotelian Manuscript from the Crusader States. Some Preliminary Remarks

Krijnie CIGGAAR

Anno Domini M^oCC^oLXXX^{mo}quarto, die Veneris ante Nativitatem Domini¹

Information on the production and circulation of western manuscripts in the Latin states in Outremer is scarce. The many secular and religious institutions, however, needed scriptoria for their chanceries and libraries, for religious books, for letter writing and for other purposes. Education of the clergy and of lay students were another reason for the production of liturgical books, texts of a more profane character and of text books. Hundreds of manuscripts must have circulated in Latin Outremer and have been available to the clergy and to interested and educated lay people². Undoubtedly, many manuscripts, complete libraries even, must have disappeared by warfare and by the carrying off of books as war booty. Manuscripts which have survived have more than once escaped attention from those who are interested in their existence. This 'neglect' is due to various reasons. Sometimes descriptions in catalogues are rather superficial, sometimes the manuscripts found their way into private collections in the West. Some found their way into Muslim and Christian communities in the Middle East where they may still be treasured or kept without being recognized as such. Others were sold on market places in foreign countries. Ricoldo de Monte Croce, when travelling through Muslim lands in the late thirteenth century, saw *spolia* from the war booty taken at Acre. On the market place of Bagdad he saw Latin breviaries³.

The situation is worse where illustrated manuscripts are concerned, regardless if they were produced in Outremer or were imported from the West. Illustrations may have escaped destruction. Although mention is made of miniatures that have disappeared from manuscripts produced in Outremer, examples of such 'cuttings' have not yet come to light (see also below).

Some manuscripts were only temporarily in Outremer, brought to the East in the baggage of visiting scholars, pilgrims or others. Sometimes there was a possibility to copy them⁴. Other manuscripts

were imported from the West or locally produced for local patrons or even for passing patrons. In spite of the eventful history of the Latin states, a number of manuscripts, sometimes illustrated, have been preserved. During the last few decades studies of these manuscripts have been published⁵. They formed the starting point for further research on specific texts and manuscripts, and have drawn attention to the cultural climate in Outremer. Attention has been paid to the cultural effects which these manuscripts may have had on their eastern surroundings⁶. These studies have certainly contributed to the discovery of more 'crusader manuscripts'.

In 1976, J. Folda ascribed a number of illustrated manuscripts to an anonymous artist whom he called the 'Hospitaller Master', because the patron of the only manuscript mentioning a sponsor was a Hospitaller knight. The painter apparently came from Paris to work in Acre. Recently he has been baptized the Paris-Acre Master and as such we shall refer to him in this article. His patron in Outremer, commonly known as William of San Stephano, had asked a certain Jean d'Antioche to make a French translation of two Latin texts, the *De inventione* of Cicero and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* which were at the time both attributed to Cicero. The illumination of the text was to be carried out by the Paris-Acre Master. Jean d'Antioche translated the texts in 1282, as we read in the manuscript Musée Condé, Chantilly,

¹ From the colophon in *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083, fol. 224v, see Leonardi 1987, 103.

² Beddie 1933, 241; Laurent/Richard 1951, 451-454; Maier 1967, *passim*.

³ Röhrich 1884, 277, 289, 295.

⁴ Ciggaar 1996, 147-150, for Edward I of England who took with him an Arthurian manuscript.

⁵ E.g. Buchthal 1957; Folda 1976.

⁶ E.g. Burnett 2000; Folda 1969/1970; Jacoby 1984.

MS 590. In the French prologue to his translation Jean d'Antioche calls his patron Guillaume de Saint-Etienne, as if the latter were a Frenchman (here I shall use the French name), although one cannot exclude that he was an Italian coming from San Stefano, the geographical name of a number of villages and towns in Italy. It is not clear if the manuscript as we know it was produced and illuminated in 1282. The year 1282 is at least a *terminus post quem* since we may expect that the final text was soon to be properly copied and illustrated⁷. Guillaume de Saint-Etienne left for Lombardy in 1287. He is an example of a patron who did not permanently live in Outremer and who employed an indigenous scholar and an immigrant painter. The passages in which Jean d'Antioche refers to his own work, are not found in a colophon in the usual sense of the word. The Paris-Acre Master is thought to have arrived from Paris in Acre in the early 1280s⁸. As a newcomer in Outremer, he illustrated two secular philosophical texts which may have introduced him into a milieu of learned ecclesiastics.

The Latin manuscripts written and illustrated in Outremer have so far never been made accessible in their entirety, i.e. their handwriting(s) and their illustrations. A corpus of these manuscripts, in printed or digitalized form, containing illustrations with a good specimen of the handwriting and other codicological details such as the use of a specific parchment, the format etc., would be very welcome. Only then shall it be possible to compare the *ductus* of the various scribes and see what kind of texts a specific copyist was responsible for, and compare the illustration programmes, the iconography of the various illuminations and the colour palette. A corpus shall be useful to distinguish between the style of the various painters involved in the decoration of manuscripts. Sometimes painters cooperated in the production of a manuscript. A good description of the ink (the colour, the quality), the parchment, and

the pigments used by the illuminators is another necessity. When mineral pigments are used, like malachite, lapis lazuli (such pigments may have been cheaper in the East than in western parts), their presence may be established by inspection with a special microscope, without doing damage to the paintings. With regard to the *ductus* of a scribe and the work of miniature painters, one should keep in mind that a handwriting changes during a life's time, and that artists equally develop their style by being influenced by others or by creating their own style and, last but not least, by becoming more experienced in their craft⁹. The greater part of western manuscripts produced during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries do not offer a colophon. None of the manuscripts which were decorated by the so-called Paris-Acre Master has a colophon in the proper sense of the word¹⁰.

A corpus of manuscripts in Outremer will prove valuable for the study of educational and cultural life in the various centres in Latin Outremer. The westerners lived in a multicultural entourage, amidst Jews and Muslims, and various eastern Christians (Greek Orthodox, Arabic speaking Greek Orthodox (the so-called Melkites), Syrian Orthodox, Armenians, Georgians etc.) and other peoples. Cross-fertilization could easily take place. Translations of texts in the various languages of the eastern communities were made into Latin and French, and sometimes vice versa. Iconographical features could be borrowed. If minor details were adopted they are not always distinguishable in black and white reproductions. Colour reproductions may better reveal silent witnesses of cultural interaction. The identification of more manuscripts and their contents which were produced in Outremer will become easier with the help of such a corpus. They may shed more light on the intellectual, cultural and artistic life in the Latin states. This may be of interest for contemporary and later developments in Western Europe and in Outremer, and give information about relations between Christians and Muslims.

It is always a pleasant surprise to find a manuscript produced and/or illustrated in the Latin states in Outremer. On a circular which was issued by Brepols Publishers for the publication programme of the *Aristoteles Latinus* project, a miniature was published which reminds one of the style of the Paris-Acre Master. The illustration comes from an Aristotelian manuscript, but its provenance was not mentioned. Working through the

⁷ Folda 1976, 42-45, 181-182; for the new name of the illustrator, now called the Paris-Acre Master, see Folda 2004 and 2005.

⁸ Folda 1976, 42-76.

⁹ Such a corpus is under consideration.

¹⁰ Kohler 1913, vii, n. 2, xv-xix, where reference is made to a manuscript made in Kyrenia, Cyprus (now 'lost'), which is an exception. The manuscript was finished April 9, 1343. The colophon may give more details.



Pl. 1. Vaticanus Latinus 2083, fol. 134r 9 (courtesy of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)

specialized catalogues of Aristotelian manuscripts, and looking for a manuscript which should have been produced in Outremer, I found the *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083 which has a colophon that suggests that the manuscript comes from Outremer. At the beginning of the text *De caelo* (fol. 134r), translated into Latin by the Dominican friar Guillaume de Moerbeke (this translation is called *Translatio nova* and is dated to the late 1260s), the philosopher is depicted in a teaching scene, pointing at the sun and the moon¹¹. C. Leonardi, the author of the catalogue of the Vatican, describes the image on fol. 134r as ‘... philosophum indicantem digito indice solem et lunam’¹². The picture on the Brepols circular, however, representing the philosopher as pointing at the moon and the stars, must come from a different manuscript. The Vatican manuscript has a total of five historiated initials, illustrating five different texts: the *Metaphysica*, *Physica*, *De caelo et mundo*, *De generatione et corruptione* and *De anima*. The initials measure ca 35 × 35 mm¹³. Small designs and other decorations, such as dragons, flourishes and pen-work, are also found in the manuscript. Capitals are sometimes ornamented. No information is given on the

sort of vellum which was used¹⁴. My hypothesis that the *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083 is a manuscript copied in the East by a certain Ivo (also spelled Yvo) who came from Sidon, is based on the text of the colophon (see below)¹⁵.

THE MANUSCRIPT *VATICANUS LATINUS* 2083

The manuscript consists of 224 folios and offers a corpus of Aristotelian manuscripts, the so-called *Corpus recentius*: the *Metaphysica*, *Meteorologica*, *De motu animalium*, *De longitudine*, *De iuventute*, *Physica*, *De caelo*, *De generatione*, *De anima*, *De sensu*, *De memoria*, *De somno*, *De progressu*, *Epistola ad Alexandrum*, *De bona fortuna*. Of Pseudo-Aristoteles one finds: *De physionomia*, *De coloribus*, *De lineis*, *De inundatione Nili*, *De proprietatibus*, *De mundo*, *De vita Aristotelis*, *De pomo* and *De intelligentia*. The texts are translations made into Latin from Arabic, Greek and Hebrew by a number of different translators, among whom Guillaume de Moerbeke, Aristippus, Robert Grosseteste and others. The folios measure 345 × 240 mm, and the text is written in brown ink, in a format of 225 × 157 mm. The format of the written text leaves wide margins to enter glosses. Some folios are missing. The parchment is described as not being of the best quality. Its provenance, calfskin or other, is not commented upon. It is clear that the *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083 is not a *de luxe* manuscript. For the brown ink, used in the manuscript, see below¹⁶.

For a ‘western’ manuscript the colophon on fol. 224v is exceptionally elaborate: ‘Anno Domini M^oCC^oLXXX^{mo} quarto, die Veneris ante Nativitatem Domini, fuerunt complecte Iste nature, de manu Ivonis Baudouyn(is) clerici Britonis de Sagitta episcopi pro M (.....) f (.....) Iohanne [changed into Ia(co)bo, according to Leonardi] de otim/ocim/odim’, and ending with the words, ‘Hic I(iber) est scriptus. qui scripsit, sit benedictus’. We learn the date of the manuscript: the year 1284, and the name of the copyist, a certain Ivo Baudouins Brito (Breton) who, according to Leonardi, should be a Frenchman, ‘Codex ab uno librario Gallico exaratus est’¹⁷. The colophon has suffered damage. Thanks to the use of UV-rays, Leonardi was able to reconstruct the name of the first owner, a certain Iohannes, whose name has been changed by a fourteenth-century hand into Iacobus/Iacobo. The place where the scribe was active is not given. The copyist finished his work on December 22, the Friday

¹¹ Guillaume de Moerbeke lived some time in the East, in Nicaea, Thebes, and became archbishop of Corinth in 1278. He was active as a translator, LMA IX, 175-176; see also n. 13 *infra*.

¹² Dr. P. de Leemans, Institute of Philosophy in Leuven, informed me that the manuscript on the Brepols circular should rather be a manuscript from the Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris. A search in the catalogue brought me to the Mazarinus 3469, for the description, see Lacombe 1955, 494; Molinier 1890, III, 93-94. This richly illuminated manuscript is accessible on the internet in the *Liber Floridus* project (<http://liberfloridus.cines.fr/textes/biblios.html>), accessed on August 9, 2005.

¹³ Lacombe 1955, II, 1219, no. 1842 (at the time there was less interest in the illumination of manuscripts, and miniatures were succinctly described); Leonardi 1987, *De caelo et mundo*, 103-104, no. 9; for the *Translatio nova* of the text, see Bossier 1989, 269-270, who dated the translation after December 1268 or after February 1269. The other miniatures will be published in a following article.

¹⁴ Leonardi 1987, 103; Folda 1976, 166, sees a preference for calfskin in Acre.

¹⁵ Lacombe 1955, II, 1219, no. 1842 (he could not use X-rays); Leonardi 1987, 103.

¹⁶ Lacombe 1955, 1219; Leonardi 1987, 94-104.

¹⁷ Leonardi 1987, 103; occasionally the manuscript has been ranged among western manuscripts, cf. *Colophons de manuscrits Occidentaux* 1973, 582, no. 12112.

before Christmas 1284¹⁸. This leaves us with the identification of the scribe, the patron and the painter.

THE SCRIBE

The scribe comes from Sagitta in Syria, which stands for Sidon. The French settlers called it Saiete or Sayete after the Arabic Şaydā. The city was a bishopric of the Greek Orthodox church and of the Latin church. In western source material, written in West Europe, the name Sagitta does not often occur. The term 'de Sagitta' seems to indicate the lieu of origin, rather than an official relation with the town¹⁹. For more than one reason it is unlikely that Ivo was bishop of Sidon, even if the chronology of the bishops of Sidon and other bishoprics in Outremer, is incomplete. The official name used for the bishop of Sidon in papal letters is *episcopus Sidoniensis*²⁰. It seems logical that the scribe used the 'vulgar' name for a city where he had grown up. The name is sometimes used in French sources written in Outremer or related to the Latin states²¹. Ivo was a cleric and son of Baudouin, and was surnamed Brito, le Breton. This leaves us with the epithet *episcopus*. The combination Ivo Brito is not unique in the thirteenth century²². When Saint Louis was in Outremer in 1250 he was served by a Dominican friar Yves le Breton who knew Arabic and was sent by the king to the Old Man of the Mountain, the leader of the Assassins²³. At an unknown date in the thirteenth century one finds an Ivo Brito as Provincial of the Dominican Order in Outremer. He wrote an official report on a Miracle performed by Saint Dominic in Tripoli, in the monastery of St Magdalene, where a certain Maria de Bellomonte was miraculously healed²⁴. In the monastery of the Dominicans in Acre one finds on February 20, 1279 a certain Ivo Brito who is one of the candidates for the priorate of the monastery. He is not elected. In 1290 he seems to have become archbishop of Nazareth and should have died in 1298²⁵. It is not unlikely that in the meantime he had been nominated bishop in one of the bishoprics of the Patriarchate of Antioch which had been overrun by Baybars in the 1260s. Some of the sees in the Patriarchate must have become vacant and the nomination of 'titular' bishops was no exception. In such cases a bishop could not occupy his see, and remained where he was. This may have been the reason for Ivo's silence on the bishopric when he

was writing the colophon and possibly for his using the French name of the city. The mystery of the French handwriting can easily be explained. Ivo Brito, born or brought up in Sidon, may have been sent to France for his education. And even if part of his education had taken place already in Outremer, his teachers (Dominican friars?) were probably Frenchmen, who had guided his writing lessons. If the identification as the candidate for the priorate in 1279 is right, and his later career did not allow him to occupy his see, it is likely that he copied the *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083 in the monastery of the Dominicans in Acre.

This brings us to some homonyms of the scribe of the *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083 in France. In the cartularies of the Notre-Dame, Paris, and of the *Universitas Parisiensis*, the Sorbonne, one finds the names of two different persons with this name in documents of the second half of the thirteenth century. In 1269, 1271 and 1273 the cartulary of the Notre-Dame mentions an Ivo Brito who was capellanus of St Eustachius. In the years 1264, 1266/1267 and 1282/1283 the cartulary of the Sorbonne mentions an Ivo Brito, magister in theologica facultate, and who had once been a canon in Reims. In 1284 we find an Ivo Brito, magister, scholaris S. Thomae de Lupara. The latter does not

¹⁸ With thanks to René Lombarts for help to determine the exact day.

¹⁹ Jacoby 2004, 119; Kedar 1973, 127; for Sidon, ODB 3, 1892-1893.

²⁰ Fedalto 1981, I, 158, II, 207; Langlois 1890, 21 (no. 123), 28 (nos 175-177). One cannot exclude the possibility that Ivo Brito introduced here a Gallicism naming himself bishop of Sidon ('de Sidon') if he wanted to avoid a repetition of genitives.

²¹ Philippe de Novare, active in Cyprus, used the names Saete and Sayete for Sidon, see Kohler 1913, 160 (index). The French version of the *Liber censuum* gives Saiete, see Michelant/Raynaud 1882, 11, 15, where the Latin version gives Sydon, see Tobler/Molinier 1879, 331 (I hope to come back to this phenomenon).

²² Occasionally the name Brito occurs as a first name, but this is not the case in the *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083.

²³ Wailly 1867, 295, 304-309.

²⁴ Quetif/Echard 1719, I, 42-43; Reichert 1896, 88-92; cf. Abel 1934, 278.

²⁵ Balme 1893, 532, 533 n. 1; see also Le Quien 1740, III, 1299, who gives the variant Guido for Yvo. For the Dominican convent in Acre, see also Dichter 1979, 46-47, who gives an illustration of the diploma in which Ivo Brito is named; *ibid.* 47, unnumbered figure, in the left column, sixth line from the bottom.

seem to qualify for the scribe in Outremer. The former, however, seems a good candidate for an identification. In 1266/1267 he is mentioned in a context of 'fratres Predicatores'. Equally interesting is the fact that in 1282/1283 he has to pay taxes for a rather spacious house in Paris, 'Domum Yvonis Britonis, condam canonici Remensis, in vico Petri Sarraceni, cum quinque cameris et cellario: vii libras'²⁶. The possession or renting of such a house suggests a certain wealth and social position of its occupant, such as being a bishop. Ivo Brito, from Sidon, may have continued to travel between Outremer and Paris. The question which comes next is: did he know the miniature painter with whom he cooperated on the manuscript and whom he may have engaged himself, taking into consideration his ecclesiastical rank²⁷.

Detailed as the colophon seems to be at first sight, and in spite of some details such as the addition that the scribe Ivo was the son of a certain Baudouin, and the handwriting (*ductus*) being French, his real identity, the place of his atelier, and his other scribal activities, have to remain in the dark.

THE PATRON AND OWNERS OF THE MANUSCRIPT

This goes even more for the patron of the manuscript or the man who was to receive the manuscript as a gift. He was certainly a learned man or a man with an interest in philosophy who wanted to obtain a corpus of Aristotelian texts. Unfortunately, the name Iohannes is a very general name and can be of little help to identify him. This is equally true for the name Iacobus, the name of the next owner, whose name was written in the colophon in the

fourteenth century and replaced the name of the first owner, by changing a few letters only. The remaining letters of the two erased words, beginning with M and f, may stand for *Magister* and *frater*, by whom a Dominican friar may have been meant (see also below). One wonders, however, why these words were partly erased and why the next owner, if not being in the same position, would have accepted the remaining letters M and f. The place where the patron came from had already puzzled C. Leonardi, who wavered between *ocim*, *odim*, *otim*, all three mysterious names. Since he does not mention an abbreviation in the erased passage, this should be the full form of a short geographical name. Geographical names beginning with an *o* in Outremer and in Western Europe are astonishingly few in number, and do not fit with the name and the length of the name given in the colophon. We have seen that place names in Outremer were not always easy for western settlers. Some of these names were difficult to pronounce and to remember, other names changed more than once and became unrecognisable in eastern and western sources. The only suggestion which I can make at the moment takes us to Sis (also spelled *Šis* or *Sīs*), the capital of Armenian Cilicia. Alternately the city was in Byzantine, Seljuk, Latin and Armenian hands. At the end of the thirteenth century, it was the capital of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, the see of an archbishopric of the Armenian church and a bishopric of the Syrian Orthodox church. As part of the Patriarchate of Antioch it was a bishopric of the Greek Orthodox church and of the newly established Latin church, *de iure* and sometimes *de facto*. In the early thirteenth century, in 1201, the Genoese had established a colony in Sis, a city which population consisted of Greeks, Armenians and Syrians, and which was accessible from the sea. The Venetians established a colony in Sis in 1261. From 1292 the Syrian Orthodox Church had its patriarchate in Sis. Western sources have preserved the name in various forms, such as Sisiya, Sūsana, Assissium, Assisum, Oussis, Assis, Asis etc. The name Ošin-Gla, castle of Ošin (also spelled Ochin), named after a local leader, also occurs as a geographical name²⁸.

Sis, rather than Ošin-Gla, was a centre of learning and of culture. Before the transfer of the catholicosate from Hromkla to Sis in 1292, the city was already known as such. Archbishop and abbot John of Grner, brother of king Hetoum I,

²⁶ Guérard 1850, I, 175 (1269); II, 64 (1273), 537 (1271); Denifle/Chatelain 1889, I, 441-442, no. 400 (1264), 461, no. 414 (1266), 599, no. 511 (1282-1283). Denifle (442, n. 1), suggests that he is the same as the Ivo in the Notre-Dame cartulary. The name of the quarter where this Ivo lived, the *vicus Petri Saraceni*, is interesting. Was it a residential quarter for people from Outremer? Did Ivo Brito, resident in Outremer, have a pied à terre in Paris? There is still a street called 'rue Pierre Sarrasin', off the Boulevard St Michel, not far from the Sorbonne and the Notre-Dame.

²⁷ Folda 1976, 42-76.

²⁸ Hellenkemper 1976, 202-213, esp. 202, and 294, where he refers to Alishan 1888, 174-176; Hild/Hellenkemper 1990, 413-416, esp. 413. The name Ošin (Oçin) occurs as a proper name in leading circles, and later of some Armenian kings; Fedalto 1981, 198.

was greatly responsible for this. He was a great patron of learning and of the arts, and was active as a scribe himself stimulating the production of illuminated manuscripts²⁹. He collaborated in the writing of the *Books of Solomon* and *Job*, which was destined for his niece Fimi, daughter of the Armenian king Hetoum. She had been married to Julian, count of Sidon and Beaufort (1247-1275), but after the fall of Sidon in 1263 she had returned to Cilicia. John of Grner's brother Sempad, also a learned man, possessed a manuscript of Aristotle's *Categories*³⁰. Such was the cultural climate in which the Genoese and Venetians lived in Sis.

There were relations between Sidon and Sis, as there were undoubtedly with other places in Frankish Outremer. One may think of Ivo Brito and John Grner in terms of ecclesiastical colleagues. However, for the moment it has to remain a mystery who was the patron of the *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083 and where he came from. This is not a *de luxe* manuscript and if the hypothesis about Sis proves to be right, the manuscript should have been made for a learned friar from Sis with modest means who had joined the Dominican Order, rather than for a princely patron. A Dominican friar rather than a king's son, may have ordered or was given this soberly illustrated text, written on a reasonably prized parchment. As for the next owner of the manuscript, a certain friar Jacobus, we are equally left in the dark. The name Jacobus was popular in circles of the Syrian Orthodox Church, but the name is too general to make further suggestions. A study of the numerous glosses, apparently very numerous in the texts *De anima* and *De caelo*, may throw more light on the identity of its owners³¹.

One should refer here to a remark made by C. Mutfian, who sees Gothic influence on Armenian art in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia at the time of John Grner, such as ornamental elements and the expressionless unemotional faces of the persons and their 'posed' gestures³². Such suggestions need further research.

THE MINIATURES

Unfortunately, the colophon says nothing about the illuminator. The *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083 is soberly illustrated. The five historiated initials seem to have been made by the same hand³³. Other decorations, such as drôleries, decorative pen-work and coloured capitals, sometimes of a more elaborate design, are

scattered over the pages. A few folios, which may have been illustrated, are lost. At the beginning of the *Metaphysica*, on folio 1r, the philosopher is seated on a cathedra while he is explaining his work to his audience, consisting of four monks. The *Physica* begins with an image of the philosopher who points at a vase, on fol. 93r. The text *De caelo et mundo*, starts on fol. 134r, and illustrates Aristotle pointing at the sun and the moon. At the beginning of the *De generatione et corruptione*, on fol. 157r, are depicted a man and woman in bed, and in the last illumination, at the beginning of the *De anima*, on fol. 176r, an angel carries off the soul of a dead man in the form of a miniature person³⁴.

The colour programme of the painter is Gothic, in the French style of the period: reds, blues, mauve, a touch of fierce green for the vase (fol. 93r), a bright orange for the philosopher's cathedra (rendered deficiently since the left arm of the chair seems to be lacking) and the bench for his students (fol. 1r); a brownish colour fills the borders, which consist of thin strips and has been used for the marginal extensions. The brown colour looks similar to the ink used by the scribe. The ink and the brown colour have both flaked and faded in places, according to colour photos of fol. 1r and fol. 176r in my possession. Judging by a colour photograph, it is not easy to conclude that gold was used where we now see a brown colour. Only by personal inspection is it possible to determine if the brown colour in certain places might be gold rather than being a pigment or ink. The parchment is not of the best quality and the sober illustration makes clear that this is not a *de luxe* manuscript³⁵.

At first sight the illuminations look rather conventional. A closer look at the images reveals details which seem to corroborate the manuscript's origin in Outremer, produced in a multicultural society.

²⁹ Der Nersessian 1993, I, xiii, xv-xvi, 77-80, 82-84, 93, 95-97, 105, 140; Mutfian 1993, 55, 65, 127, 132-135.

³⁰ Der Nersessian 1993, I, 82, 86, 87, 89; LaMonte 1944/1945, 206-209. Sempad, another brother of Hethoum I, translated the French *Assises* of Antioch into Armenian.

³¹ Tournet [1910], 286, 316, 326, 331, 724, where mention is made of the Dominican friar Jacobin who accompanied the bishop of Nébron in the 1370s.

³² Mutfian 1993, 132.

³³ Only the miniature on fol. 157r has been published in black and white, Katterbach *et al.* 1929, 29-30, and Pl. 24.

³⁴ Leonardi 1987, 104.

³⁵ Edbury/Folda 1994, 248.

So far no overall study exists of the iconography of Aristotelian manuscripts or of literary texts in which the Greek philosopher figures, such as the *Lai d'Aristote*. Still, it is of interest to draw attention to some details³⁶.

For practical reasons, and in view of the fact that one has to see a manuscript for oneself, I have decided to publish in this preliminary article only one miniature, the historiated initial D, at the beginning of the text *De caelo*, fol. 134r (Pl. 1)³⁷. We see Aristotle teaching three monks, while pointing to the sun and the moon. The philosopher is clad in a dark red tunic with a mauve undercoat. The monks, clad in mauve and red, can be recognized from their tonsures. Aristotle too is represented as a tonsured man. The scene is rendered on a dark blue background with a diaper pattern. White surface decoration is applied to the remaining parts of the initial. In the tradition of Gothic illumination, the initial has decorative marginal extensions, at the top slightly surpassing the text, protruding into the margin and ending in a simple Gothic curl (a sort of spiky protuberance) and, while stretching down all along the text column, ends at the bottom in a more elaborate

Gothic pattern of such curls. In the other initials the painter has used contrasting colour patterns: the background is red when the philosopher is wearing a blue cloak, etc.

Aristotle does not wear a bonnet like Cicero, who is portrayed with this attribute of philosophers by the Paris-Acre Master in the Chantilly MS 590, fol. 1r, in the French translation by Jean d'Antioche³⁸. More curious is the fact that the painter has given him a tonsure as if he were a monk and, more curiously, by giving him a beard. He may have done so realising that Aristotle was a Greek philosopher and may have followed the stereotypes in descriptions of the various nations in Outremer and, not to forget, the reality of everyday life where Greeks were described and represented as always having a beard. In miniatures in other crusader manuscripts we see the same phenomenon. A tonsured ecclesiastic or clerk with a beard, however, remains an exception in miniature painting. Greek monks, even if they were tonsured, do not seem to have been represented as such. They were represented with a monk's hat³⁹. Aristotle's portrait is an interesting amalgam of eastern and western traditions, culturally and iconographically.

The miniature seems to offer another combination of iconographical traditions. The philosopher points at the sun and the moon where other illuminations of the Aristotelian scene represent him as pointing at the moon and the stars⁴⁰. The presence of sun and moon is not entirely illogical, and reminds one of the Fourth Day of the Creation. The painter may have been looking for a model and may have found his inspiration in a Bible, in Latin or in Old French, which was produced and/or circulated in Outremer around 1280⁴¹.

It is possible that the painter could only dispose of a limited number of models and that he had to make his own iconographical decisions which made him combine different traditions and which seem to betray him as working in Outremer. As for his craft, his style is less experienced, less refined, less assured than that of his colleague, the Paris-Acre Master. The faces are less refined, and the coiffure, i.e. the curls over the ears are 'wilder'. We do not know if he was a western artist who came to the East or was born and raised in Outremer where he may have been brought up and trained in a Frankish milieu or in a milieu of Eastern Christians, or even in a mixed environment. Only a study of the iconography of the subject, i.e. Aristotle teaching

³⁶ Lacombe 1939-1955; Minio-Paluello 1961, *passim*; e.g. Delboulle 1951, 6, n. 1, 61 (written between 1200 and 1220), and LMA I, 947-948.

³⁷ In future I hope to be able to publish in colour all the miniatures and other decorations of the manuscript.

³⁸ Folda 1976, Pls 29, 31; other Outremer manuscripts depict Israelites with such a bonnet, e.g. Folda 1976, Pls 57, 59-60. The manuscript Cambridge, University Library, Add. MS 3471 [folio number unknown], is described as depicting Richard de Leycestria, chancellor of Cambridge University who, around 1222, is lecturing two monks (no catalogue of the manuscripts of Cambridge University Library is yet available); master and students are tonsured. For the illustration of the Cambridge manuscript see Marendon 1996, frontispiece. Such representations of a teaching scene may have circulated in Outremer and have served as a model.

³⁹ Kedar 1998, 124, s.v. De Surianis. On fol. 1r and fol. 93r the beard is less visible; for bearded Greeks see Folda 1976, e.g. Pls 32 (Greek elders observing a class where the master teaches from the works of Cicero), 102, 124, 146, 159 (Greek court in Constantinople, the emperor and his courtiers). For Greek monks see e.g. ODB 3, 2093-2094, s.v. tonsure, and Hetherington 1974, 82.

⁴⁰ Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3469, fol. 294r (<http://liberfloridus.cines.fr/textes/biblios.html>), accessed on August 9, 2005.

⁴¹ Folda 1976, 179-180, 188-192, Pls 38, 52; Folda 1996, 270, Pl. 2.

his various theories, in the various Eastern and Western Christian traditions including the *Lai d'Aristote*, dating to the early thirteenth century, may clarify the iconography of the anonymous painter who painted these miniatures after the scribe had finished his text just before Christmas 1284, which almost takes us to the year 1285.

THE *VORLAGE* OF THE *VATICANUS LATINUS* 2083

An important element in the process of the production of a manuscript is the availability of a model. One has to have a *Vorlage* containing the text which has to be copied. Depending on the situation, the model was given or lent to the scribe by the patron, or was available in the library in the monastery of which 'his' scriptorium formed part. Sometimes the patron had to provide the text himself. Rarely are we informed about the process. The Latin patriarch of Antioch Aimery of Limoges, for instance, corresponded with people in Constantinople asking them to find Greek manuscripts which he wanted to be translated⁴².

Taking into consideration the iconography of the manuscript, and especially of the miniature illustrating the text *De caelo*, which shows some unconventional elements, one wonders if the model was an illustrated text. It is possible that the illuminator had to find his own way to do the job.

So far the *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083 is the only Aristotelian manuscript with a Latin text which can be related to Outremer. Knowledge of the Aristotelian philosophy was widely spread in Western Europe, witness the growing number of manuscripts⁴³. Among the many western visitors of the Latin states a growing number must have been familiar with Aristotelian texts. Nevertheless references to such knowledge among residents and visitors, or the circulation of such texts, is rather scarce.

Jean d'Antioche, who translated for Guillaume de Saint-Etienne the two texts *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* into French, is one of the few persons who had some knowledge of Aristotle. He added to his translation three chapters in which, among others, he discusses aspects of Aristotle's philosophy, such as the perpetual movement of the stars⁴⁴. Nothing is known of the life and career of Jean d'Antioche, also called Jean de Harenc after the Latin stronghold Harenc situated some 20 km east of Antioch (nowadays called Harim, on the Syrian-Turkish border) where he

may have spent part of his life. In 1268 Antioch was conquered by Baybars, the Mamluk leader. Jean d'Antioche may have been educated in Antioch which was a centre of learning and cultural activity. There he may have become familiar with the works of Aristotle. Elsewhere in Latin Outremer, knowledge of Aristotle is detected in quotations in the work of authors who were locally active⁴⁵. Another possibility is his contact with Guillaume de Saint-Etienne, the sponsor of the already mentioned translations. The latter, an influential member of the Hospital, may have cared for refugees. Guillaume had a certain reputation for his knowledge of Aristotle. In 1287 he left the East and spent some years in Lombardy where he seems to have stayed until 1290. In 1296, he came to Cyprus where he was active as commander of the Hospital and is last mentioned in 1303⁴⁶. During the period 1299 to 1310, a certain Pierre de Paris stayed in Cyprus where he made translations into French for Simon le Rat, marshal of the Hospital. The Hospital had transferred its headquarters to Cyprus after the fall of Acre in 1291. Pierre de Paris translated into French the *Politica* of Aristotle for an unknown patron⁴⁷.

Could it be that Guillaume de Saint-Etienne provided Ivo Brito with an Aristotelian manuscript containing the *Corpus recentius* from his own library or from the Library of the Hospital? One may assume that the manuscripts of the Military Orders were soberly decorated, if decorated at all.

⁴² Aimery of Limoges, correspondence, *PL* 202, c. 231-232.

⁴³ Lacombe 1939-1955, gives only succinct descriptions of the miniatures.

⁴⁴ Delisle 1906, 4-6, 8, 11. It seems that these texts are only fragmentarily accessible. For Harenc, see Deschamps 1973, 341.

⁴⁵ Williams 1997, 91-93.

⁴⁶ Folda 1976, 43 n. 5; Luttrell 1965, 450; Riley-Smith 1967, 272-273.

⁴⁷ Riley-Smith 1967, 273; Thomas 1923, 29-33; cf. Ciggaar 1993, 94-95; for Simon Le Rat, see also Riley-Smith 1967, 212, 214, 315. Edbury 1998, 175, refers to the Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Fr. 19026, probably made in Cyprus, where two 'spurious' chapters in the *Livre des Assises* by John of Jaffa, give references to Aristotle and Cicero; see also Laurent/Richard 1951, 453, for a manuscript in the library of Guy Ibelin, Dominican bishop of Limassol (Cyprus) who possessed a manuscript of Walter Burleigh's commentary on Aristotle's *Physica*. A survey of the interest in Aristotle in Outremer could be useful to understand the cultural climate in the Latin states.

The presence of an Aristotelian manuscript was not necessarily a novum in a society where people from the West arrived almost daily to stay for longer or shorter periods⁴⁸.

The scribal activities of Ivo Brito, son of a certain Baudouin, and who may have been a member of the Dominican Order, corroborate the idea that the Dominicans in Outremer may have had their own scriptorium where religious and lay texts were copied, and where painters were active who were either members of the Order or who did freelance jobs, as local or as wandering artists. The portrait of a bearded teacher, who at the same time has a tonsure, seems the work of an indigenous painter rather than of a freshly arrived Frankish painter or of someone who had been raised in a Frankish milieu. The Paris-Acre Master was not the sole painter in Outremer. The presence of at least one other painter, the artist of the *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083, is confirmed by the existence of the Aristotelian miniatures, apparently of a different hand, which can be dated to the year 1284 or shortly later. A manuscript with an Aristotelian corpus, which is soberly illustrated, fits very well into the cultural life of Acre, where a mixed population was interested in manuscripts⁴⁹.

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⁴⁸ A search in Lacombe 1939-1955 did not reveal another example of the *Corpus recentius* offering the same order as the *Vaticanus Latinus* 2083.

⁴⁹ Jacoby 2004, 115-118.

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Zum Dach über dem Ostumgang der Kirche des Bishuyklosters bei Suhag

Peter GROSSMANN

Als ich vor nahezu 40 Jahren meine Rekonstruktion der Überdeckung des Naos der Kirche des Bishuyklosters bei Sühāḡ (Abb. 1)¹ entwarf², ließ ich mich bei der Frage nach der Neigung des Mittelschiffsdachs von dem in Italien auch noch in der Spätantike verbreiteten, sich an das klassische Vorbild haltende relativ flach geneigte Giebeldach leiten, ungeachtet der Tatsache, daß es im spätantiken Ägypten ein derartiges Dach nicht mehr gegeben haben kann³. Alle aus dieser Zeit auf uns gekommenen Hinweise auf die Dachneigungen öffentlicher Gebäude wie auch zahlreiche ebenfalls mit einem oberen Giebel ausgestatteten Grabstelen zeigen⁴, daß damals in Ägypten erheblich stärker geneigte Dächer in Übung waren. Zwar ist dieser Fehler bisher nirgends beanstandet worden, mir selbst ist er jedoch ein sich zunehmend bemerkbar machender Dorn im Auge und Anlaß genug, im folgende eine neue Rekonstruktion der Dachgestaltung der Kirche des Bishuyklosters vorzulegen und zur Diskussion zu stellen (Abb. 2).

Selbstverständlich tun sich mit einem stärker geneigten und damit höher hinaufreichenden Dach Probleme auf, die bei einem nur mäßig geneigten Dach nicht in dem Maße in den Vordergrund treten. Ein besonderes Problem bereitet vor allem die Überdeckung des zwischen der östlichen Querkolonnade des Naos mit dem über zwei höheren Säulen errichteten vorderen Triumphbogen und der Sanktuariumsfassade befindlichen Ostumgangs, wobei die Bezeichnung des letzteren allerdings relativiert werden muß und nur im Sinne einer querorientierten schmalen, den Seitenschiffen vergleichbaren Raumgestalt verstanden werden darf, da seine Qualität als Umgang durch das in seinen Bereich eingreifende und von Schranken umgebene erhöhte Presbyterium (*bema*) unterbrochen wird⁵. In unserer damaligen Rekonstruktion hatten wir das relativ flach geneigte Mittelschiffdach des Naos entsprechend der Rekonstruktion von U. Monneret de Villard⁶ unter Einbeziehung des Ostumgangs über

die vordere Triumphbogenwand hinweg bis an die Sanktuariumsfassade durchgezogen. Dabei bot es sich an, die Pilaster zu beiden Seiten des Triumphbogens am Sanktuariumseingang (Eingang zum Trikonchos) mit ihren hoch sitzenden Kapitellen als Auflager nach vorne greifender Querbogen zu verstehen, die der vorderen Triumphbogenwand eine zusätzliche Stützung boten⁷. Letzteres hat freilich den Nachteil, daß der im oberen Bereich der Sanktuariumsfassade befindliche Wandabschnitt mit dem Fenster der Trikonchosvierung direkt mit der Dachkonstruktion über dem Naos der Kirche in Verbindung trat. Bei einer relativ flachen Neigung des Mittelschiffsdachs fällt das allerdings weniger stark ins Gewicht. Das mittlere Tambourfenster über dem Trikonchos würde sich in den Dachraum über dem Ostumgang geöffnet haben, und der Abstand bis zu der eigentlichen Dachkonstruktion (Wölbung) über der Vierung des Trikonchos, die aus vielerlei bautechnischen Gründen erst über dem First des Langhausdachs angesetzt haben dürfte,

¹ Der Plan gibt den Zustand wieder, wie wir ihn in 1976 vorgefunden haben. Inzwischen sind die damals noch sichtbaren Reste der Stylobate abgeräumt worden. Das deutlich über einem längeren Abschnitt ausgebrochene Mauerwerk ist in dem für die Position der Westapsis des Südnarthex in Frage kommenden Bereich aus Mißverständnis ebenflächig abgemauert und das bautechnisch interessante südöstliche Eckfenster des ursprünglichen Treppenaufgangs zugemauert worden.

² Grossmann 1969, 144-168, bes. 158ff., Abb. 3.

³ S. vor allem Monneret de Villard 1926, 97ff., Abb. 114; von ihm wird eine Dachneigung von 45° als normal angesehen, ebenda 99.

⁴ Zahlreiche Beispiele bei Crum 1902 *passim*; sowie neuerdings Kamel 1987 *passim*, mit allerdings sehr schlechten Photographien.

⁵ Hinweis Descœudres 2003, 637-641, bes. 639.

⁶ Monneret de Villard 1926, Abb. 114.

⁷ Grossmann 1969, 159; nach Monneret de Villard 1926, 99, Abb. 114, wo allerdings der vordere Triumphbogen unberücksichtigt geblieben ist.

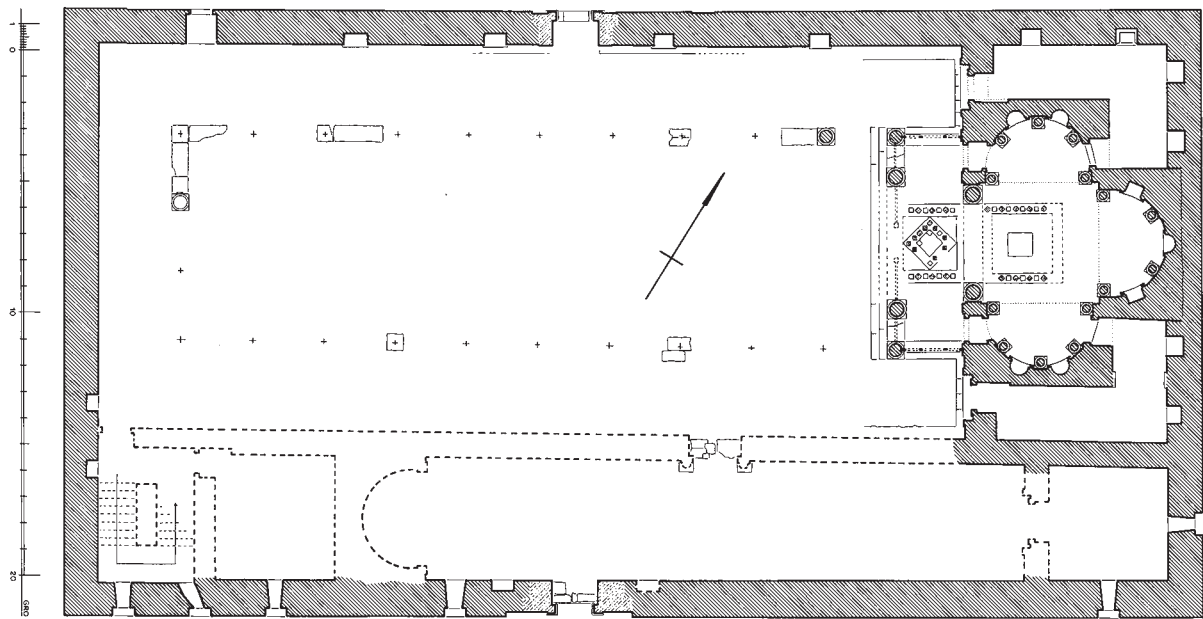


Abb. 1: Grundriß der Kirche des Bishuyklosters bei Suhag

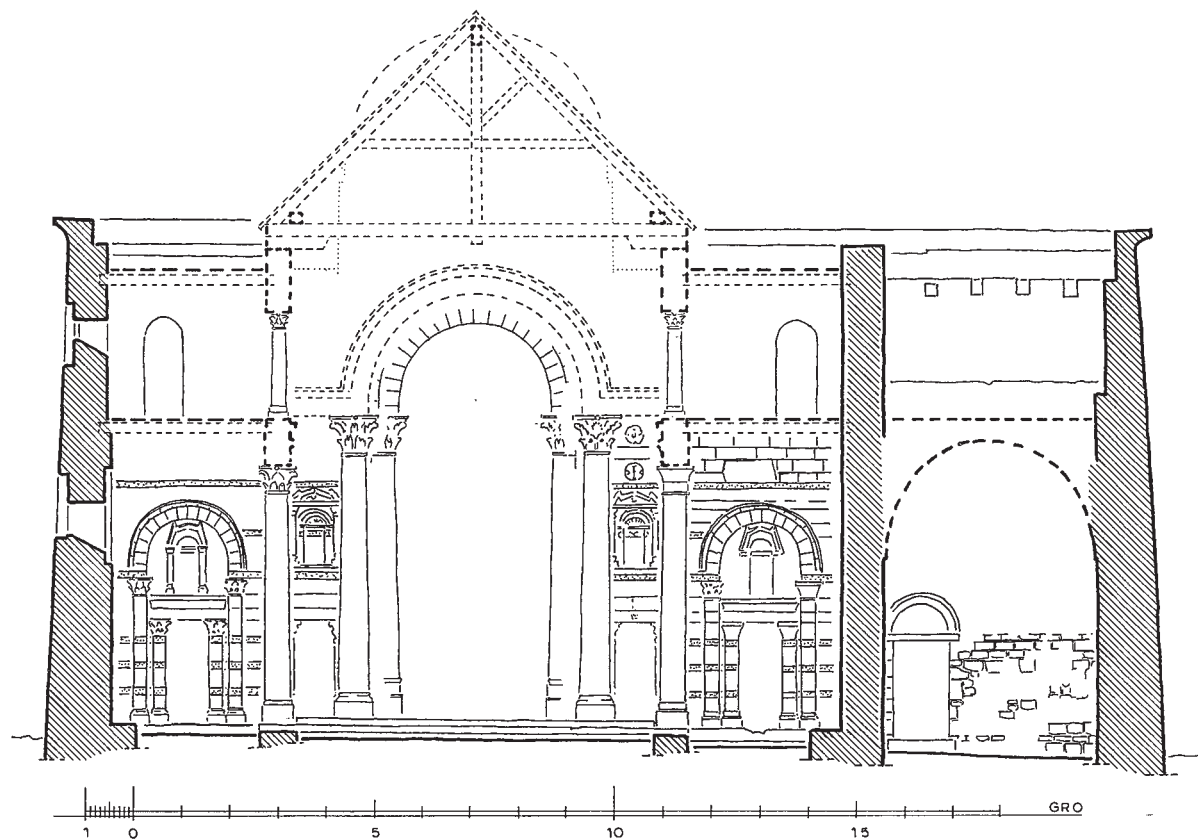


Abb. 2: Querschnitt durch den Naos der Kirche mit Ergänzung der vorderen Triumphbogenwand

würde von ästhetisch akzeptabler Höhe sein. Bei einer steileren Rekonstruktion des Mittelschiffdachs gerät jedoch – wenn man lästige Überschneidungen vermeiden will – alles viel höher hinauf, so daß Proportionen entstehen, die sich baukünstlerisch nicht mehr vertreten lassen. Beispielsweise würde der Tambour über der Vierung des Trikonchos die Gestalt eines Turmes annehmen, was sicher nicht beabsichtigt war.

Die genannten Probleme lassen sich nur dann vermeiden, wenn auf eine unmittelbare bauliche Verbindung der beiden Triumphbogen verzichtet wird, das steilere Giebeldach über dem Mittelschiff bereits an der vorderen Triumphbogenwand oder über der Ostkolonnade des Naos zum Abschluß kommt und für die Überdeckung des Ostumgangs ein normales, von einfachen Deckenbalken getragenes Flachdach angenommen wird (Abb. 3). Es ist zugleich sinnvoll, dieses Flachdach auf einer entsprechenden Höhe wie das Dach über den Emporen der Seitenschiffe zu ergänzen. Zwar verliert die vordere Triumphbogenwand dadurch ihre früher von uns angenommenen und oben genannten rückwärtigen Bogenstützen⁸, doch darf dies vernachlässigt werden, denn auch die einer ähnlichen baustatischen Beanspruchung ausgesetzte Hochwand über der westlichen Querkolonnade des Westumgangs des Naos der Kirche kommt ohne entsprechende Querstützungen aus, wie das auch bei anderen Kirchen in der Thebais der Fall ist⁹. Außerdem würde man aus dem Innern der Kirche diesen Wechsel in der Dachgestaltung gar nicht bemerkt haben, da ohnehin der Dachraum über dem Mittelschiff sicherlich durch eine Zwischendecke verschlossen gewesen sein wird, was sich schon aus Gründen der Sauberhaltung des Kircheninnern empfahl¹⁰. Darüber hinaus wäre ohne eine Zwischendecke im Winter unnötig viel Kälte, im Sommer unnötig viel Wärme in das Innere der Kirche gelangt.

Die Balkenlöcher für die Decke über den Seitenschiffsemporen sind auf der Nordseite der Kirche noch gut zu erkennen¹¹ und geben damit einen sicheren Hinweis über die Höhe des Dachs. Über diesen Balken sind eine Bretterlage und dann ein Sandsteinplattenbelag zu ergänzen, wie sich ein entsprechendes Paviment in einigen Bereichen auf dem Dach der benachbarten großen Kirche des Schenuteklosters erhalten hat. Einen Hinweis über die Konstruktionshöhe des Dachaufbaus bietet der Rücksprung am Fuß der Brüstungsmauer (*parapetto*) über

der Außenmauer. Auf etwa gleicher Höhe – jedenfalls nicht tiefer, denn es ist unwahrscheinlich, daß das Dach über einem mittleren Bereich der Kirche tiefer sitzt als an den Seiten – sollte auch das Flachdach über dem Ostumgang ergänzt werden können. Abweichend von ersten düften jedoch hier die Balken nicht quer zum Mittelschiff, sondern der kürzeren Entfernung wegen parallel zur Längsrichtung der Kirche gespannt gewesen sein, wobei man dann auch mit geringeren Balkenquerschnitten

⁸ Vgl. Grossmann 1969, 159.

⁹ Alle bekannten Beispiele mit von den Eckstützen ausgehenden und nach vorne greifenden Querbogen gehören erst einer jüngeren Zeit an; sie sind auf jeden Fall bei der Rekonstruktion der Kirchen von Dandarā, Grossmann 2003, 443ff., Abb. 63, und Saqqāra, ebenda 508ff., Abb. 126, wegen der Schwäche der hier zur Verfügung stehenden Säulen bzw. seitlichen Wandungen vorzusetzen.

¹⁰ Offene Dachstühle scheint es nur in Syrien sowie in einigen mittelalterlichen Kirchen Europas, vor allem Italiens gegeben zu haben, doch ist jeweils zu prüfen, wie weit die überlieferten Beispiele wirklich authentisch sind. In dieser Hinsicht ist auch F.W. Deichmann zu widersprechen, der in seinem Beitrag, Untersuchungen zu Dach und Decke, in: K. Schauenberg (Hrsg.), *Charites. Studien zur Altertumswissenschaft* (= FS Ernst Langlotz, Bonn 1957) 249–264, bes. 257, auf Grund einer Notiz bei Optatus von Mileve, *de schismate Donatistarum* I, 18 (engl. Übers. in: M. Edwards, *Optatus: Against the Donatists*, [TTH 27, 1997] 45), über die Erstürmung einer Kirche durch die Donatisten, bei der letztere das Dach abgedeckt und die Dachziegel (*tegules*) auf die sich schützend um den Altar versammelten Diakone geworfen hätten, schließt, daß die Kirche einen zum Kirchenschiff offenen Dachstuhl gehabt haben müsse, da ein derartiger Vorgang nur bei einem offenen Dachstuhl möglich gewesen wäre. Macht man sich jedoch klar, wie die Dachziegel auf die um den Altar versammelten Diakone hätten geworfen werden können, so konnte das nur vom Boden des Dachraumes aus geschehen sein, dem einzigen Bereich, in dem man sich frei bewegen konnte, denn auf dem schrägen eigentlichen Dach wäre ein Aufenthalt höchst gefährlich gewesen, dürfte auch unzugänglich gewesen sein, und kommt deswegen nicht in Frage. Die Dachschrägen wären auf jeden Fall nur aus dem Dachraum zu betreten gewesen. Man wird daher mit größerer Wahrscheinlichkeit im Boden des Dachraumes durch Herausnahme einiger Bodenbretter ein größeres Loch geschaffen haben und die Dachziegel selbst von unten zwischen den Pfetten und Sparren hochgestoßen und dann herausgelöst haben. Ein ähnlicher Vorgang ereignete sich nach der Darstellung im *libellus precum* der Presbyter Faustinus und Marcellinus (Text abgedruckt bei K. Lange, *Haus und Halle* (Leipzig 1885) 315 Anm. 1) wenige Jahre später bei einer der Basiliken (angeblich der Basilica Libेरiana) auch in Rom anlässlich der tumultartigen Auseinandersetzungen bei der Bischofswahl des Damascus in 366, Deichmann, ebenda 257.

¹¹ Evers/Romero 1964, Abb. R.

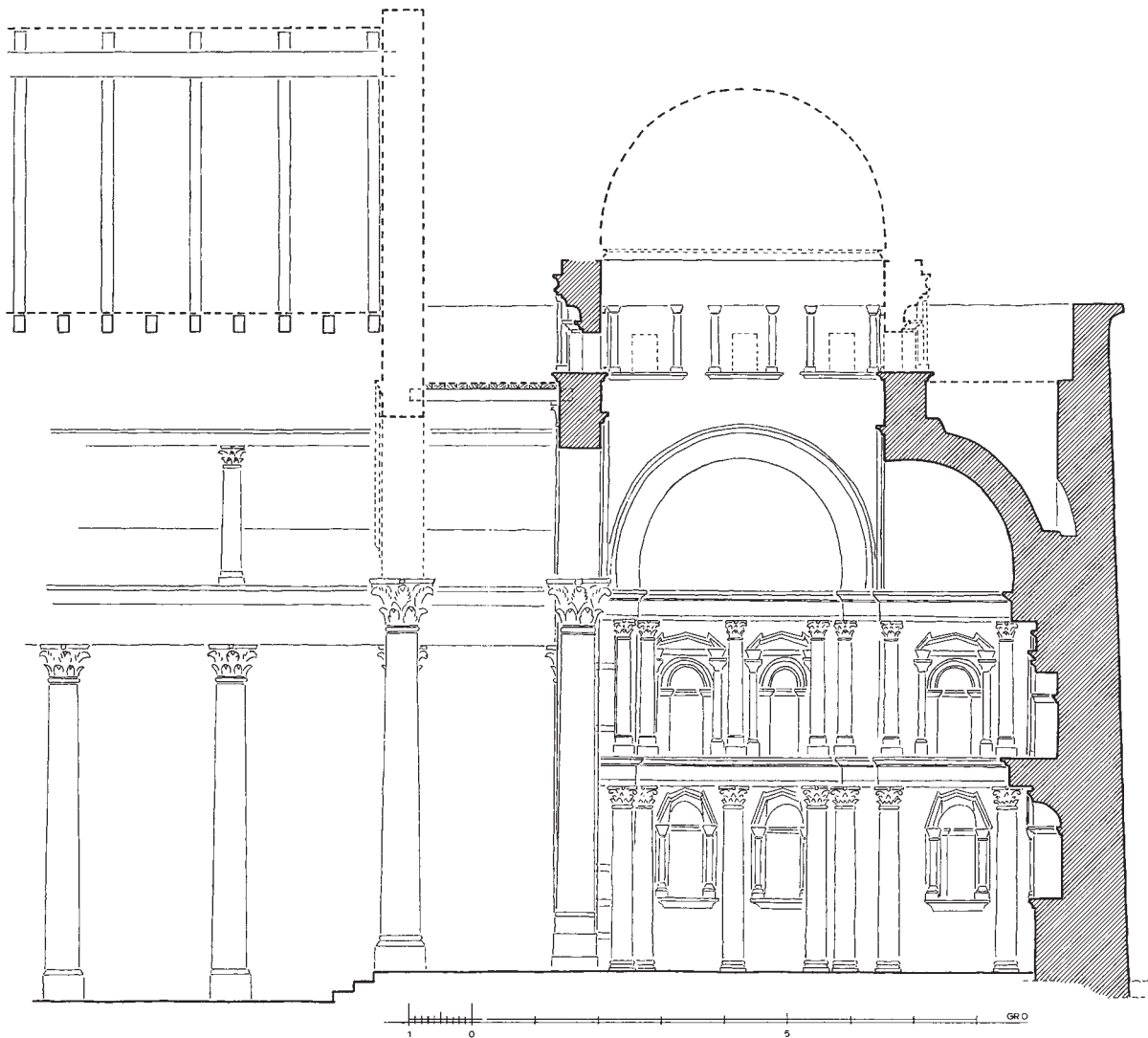


Abb. 3: Längsschnitt der Ostpartie der Kirche mit Rekonstruktion der Dachkonstruktion

ausgekommen sein würde. Allerdings sind hier in den Mauerwerksresten über dem Triumphbogen der Sanktuariumsfassade keinerlei Balkenlöcher für hier

eingreifende Balken zu erkennen, doch ist das unerheblich, denn das Mauerwerk oberhalb der zu beiden Seiten des Triumphbogens befindlichen Pilasterkapitelteile ist auf dem Niveau, das für die Auflager der Balken in Frage kommt, an keiner Stelle mehr in Ordnung, so daß hier entsprechende Einlassungen für die Balken ohne weiteres ergänzt werden können. Erst das etwas höher sitzende mittlere Fenster der westlichen Tambourseite könnte wiederum original sein oder wenigstens in seiner originalen Position sitzen¹², auch wenn der unter ihm befindliche Triumphbogen nach den Beobachtungen von W. de Bock¹³ und S. Clarke¹⁴ im Scheitel zu einem nicht näher bestimmbareren Zeitpunkt einmal eingestürzt

¹² Auch wenn nach dem Urteil von De Bock 1901, 66 die gesamte derzeitige Komposition dieses Fensters nicht original ist, sondern zu einer normalen Wandnische gehört und das ursprüngliche Fenster zusammen mit der Scheitelpartie des Triumphbogens in die Tiefe gestürzt ist, so bestanden doch in den teilweise erhaltenen übrigen Fenstern hinreichend sichere Anhaltspunkte, auf welcher Höhe die dazu gehörige Fensterbank einzusetzen war.

¹³ De Bock 1901, 65.

¹⁴ Clarke 1912, 168.

ist und modern mit Brandziegeln an Stelle des originalen Keilsteinmauerwerks repariert wurde¹⁵. Wichtig ist allerdings, ob zwischen der Oberkante der genannten Pilasterkapitelle und der in Form einer Hohlkehle nach außen vortretenden Bankfläche jenes Fensters genügend Platz enthalten ist, um dazwischen die genannten Deckenbalken einzufügen¹⁶.

Doch an dieser Stelle offenbaren sich Schwierigkeiten. Nach den bisher publizierten, freilich sämtlich nicht zuverlässigen Aufnahmeplänen der Kirche¹⁷ sitzen jene Pilasterkapitelle auf einer Höhe, daß zwischen ihnen und dem unteren Rand der Hohlkehle unter der Fensterbank des mittleren Tambourfensters kein Platz mehr zur Einführung einer Balkenlage verbleibt. Eine Höherverlegung der Balken in den Bereich des Fensters kommt jedoch aus ästhetischen Gründen nicht in Betracht, und die Verlegung der Balken in eine noch höhere Position, oberhalb dieses Fensters hätte Verhältnisse heraufbeschworen, die ebenfalls als unwahrscheinlich abzulehnen sind.

Eine Frage ist jedoch, befinden sich die genannten Pilasterkapitelle noch an ihrem originalen Ort? Schaut man sich nach älteren Photographien um, die einen Zustand vor der neuzeitlichen Rekonstruktion der Kirche zeigen, so wird deutlich, daß die beiden Kapitelle nördlich und südlich des Triumphbogens und unterhalb des genannten Fensters nicht auf gleicher Höhe sitzen¹⁸ (Taf. 1), was kaum dem originalen Zustand entsprochen haben wird. Eines der beiden Kapitelle sitzt also falsch und ist wahrscheinlich bei einer frühzeitig, und zwar noch vor dem Besuch von W. de Bock in 1888/1889¹⁹ durchgeführten Restaurierung, die aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach im Zusammenhang mit dem seinerzeit in Ziegelwerk hergestellten Wiederaufbaus des zu einem nicht näher bekannten Zeitpunkt eingestürzten Triumphbogens²⁰ erfolgte, nicht in der richtigen Position eingesetzt worden. Es zeigt sich nun, daß bei dem rechten Kapitell der auf beiden Seiten anschließende Verband der aus hoch stehenden Blöcken hergestellten Hausteineinfassung des inneren, grober ausgeführten Kernmauerwerks (vermutlich Brandziegel) der Sanktuariumsfassade in seinem Schichtenverlauf sehr gut zu dem Steinverband des Kapitells und des zu diesem Kapitell gehörigen Schafts paßt²¹ (Taf. 2)²². Insbesondere gilt das für die oberen, der Höhe des Kapitells entsprechenden hohen Quader und die darunter befindlichen, erheblich flacheren Blöcke unterhalb des Kapitells, die aber sehr deutlich der

Quaderhöhe am oberen Ende des Schafts entsprechen. Dagegen ist der Verband bei dem linken Pilasterkapitell deutlich in Unordnung²³ (Taf. 3), was wohl mit dem von de Bock und Somers Clarke erwähnten Einsturz der Mittelpartie des Triumphbogens²⁴ zusammenhängt. Aus diesem sehr klar ins Auge springenden Befund darf geschlossen werden, daß das rechte Pilasterkapitell noch an der originalen Stelle sitzt. Unglücklicherweise wurde jedoch

¹⁵ Nach De Bock 1901, 66, ist jenes mittlere Fenster allerdings nicht original.

¹⁶ Möglichkeiten, ohne Balkenlöcher auszukommen, gäbe es, indem man die betreffenden Balken auf einen entlang der Sanktuariumsfassade geführten Streichbalken aufsetzt, der selbst von Konsolen oder wie im vorliegenden Fall vermutlich von den vortretenden Kapitellen der zu beiden Seiten des Triumphbogens hoch geführten Pilastern gehalten sein dürfte. Ähnliche Streichbalken wurden auch für die Zwischendecke in der Kirche des San Vitale zu Ravenna verwendet, s. F.W. Deichmann 1976, 65, Abb. 67; eine weitere Möglichkeit bestände in der Ergänzung von Zwischenauflegern in Form von Balken, die ebenfalls auf den Kapitellen der genannten Pilaster aufgesetzt gewesen sein könnten.

¹⁷ Clarke 1912, 161-171, Taf. 50-51; Monneret de Villard 1926, 97ff., Abb. 114-116; Evers-Romero 1964, 177ff., Abb. I, der die Aufnahmen einer 1962 von der Universität Darmstadt durchgeführten Surveykampagne zu Grunde liegen. Ein seinerzeit ebenfalls hergestellter Längsschnitt ist in der vorliegenden Publikation nicht zum Abdruck gelangt. Eine Kopie dieses Längsschnitts wurde mir freundlicherweise von H. Knell überlassen. Eine Aufnahme der Fassade von W. de Bock gibt es leider nicht. Dieser hat nur einen Schnitt mit Maßangaben der nördlichen Außenwand publiziert: De Bock 1901, 65, Abb. 77.

¹⁸ Sehr deutlich vor allem auf dem Photo von De Bock 1901, Taf. 25, das den oberen Bereich der Sanktuariumsfassade oberhalb der neuzeitlichen Vorbauten gewissermaßen als Orthophoto zeigt; weniger deutlich, aber auch erkennbar bei Monneret de Villard 1925, Abb. 42.

¹⁹ S. De Bock 1901, 1.

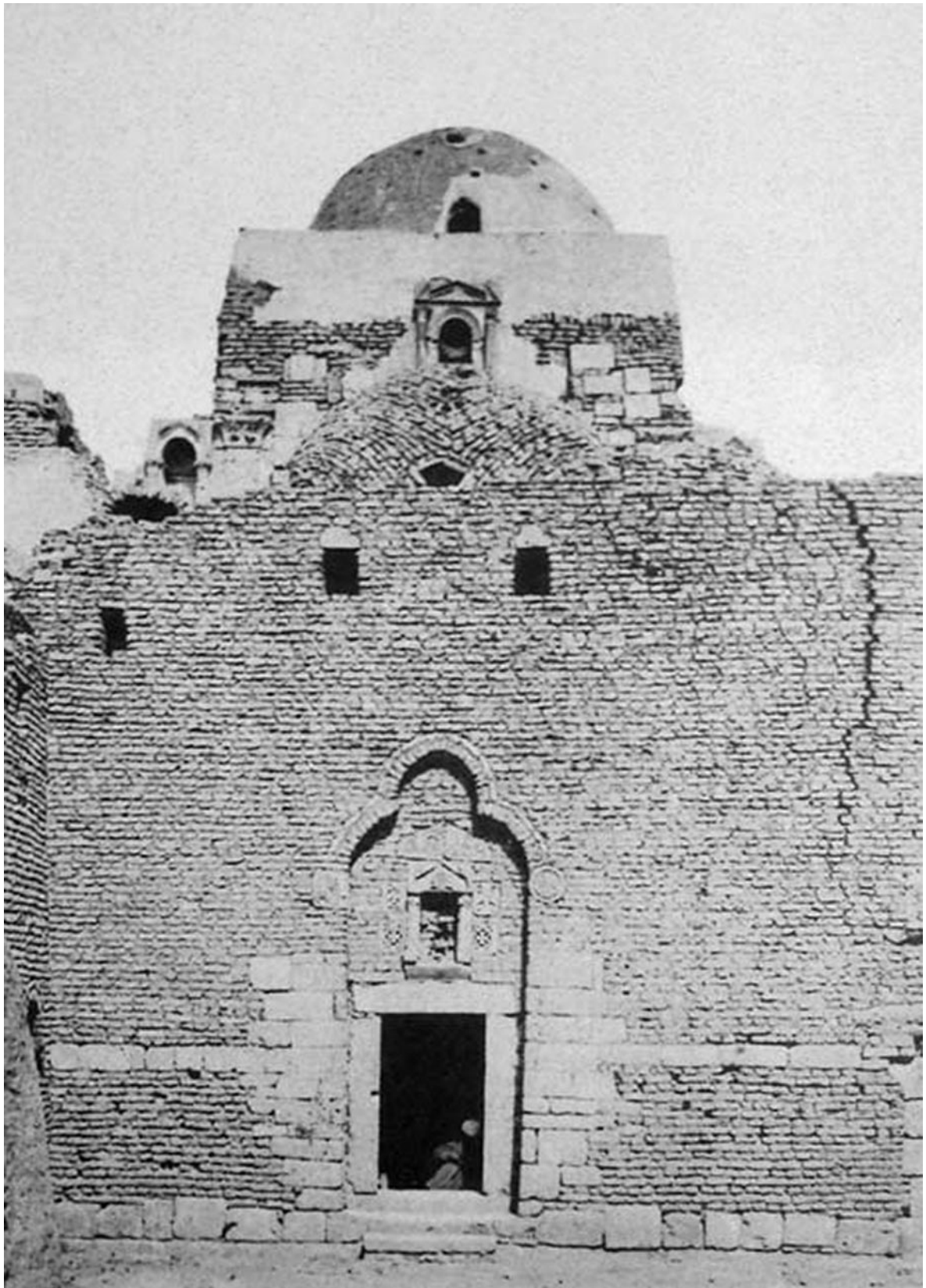
²⁰ Hinweis bei De Bock 1901, 65; und Clarke 1912, 168.

²¹ Deutlich auf dem bei Monneret de Villard 1926, 97 und Monneret de Villard 1925, Abb. 46, abgebildeten Photo; leider ist allerdings auf diesem Photo die Beziehung zu dem mittleren Tambourfenster durch die mittelalterlichen Kuppelwölbung über dem Hurus verdeckt; s. auch De Bock, 1901, 61-67, bes. 64, Taf. 25.

²² Nach einer älteren von Monneret de Villard 1925, Abb. 46 publizierten Photographie.

²³ Monneret de Villard 1926, 97; und Monneret de Villard 1925, Abb. 46; sowie besonders De Bock 1901, Taf. 26; im Zuge einer 1920 durchgeführten Restaurierung hat man jedoch versucht, einen Ausgleich zu schaffen, ebenda Abb. 42, wobei man, da die Position des höher sitzenden linken Kapitells als original angesehen wurde, die Lagerfugen des neu geschaffenen Hausteinverbands nach links ansteigen ließ.

²⁴ De Bock 1901, 65f.; Clarke 1912, 168.



Taf. 1: Blick auf die Ostpartie der Kirche (nach W. de Bock 1901)



Taf. 2: Blick auf die Ostpartie der Kirche (nach Monneret de Villard 1925)

bei allen bisherigen Rekonstruktionsversuchen der Sanktuariumsfassade jenes von uns als fraglich beurteilte linke Kapitell als *in situ* angesehen. Der über beiden Kapitellen folgende Verband der Quadereinfassung ist dagegen nicht mehr original.

Das rechte Pilasterkapitell scheint nun nach diesen älteren Photographien und im Gegensatz zu den bisher publizierten Aufnahmeplänen²⁵ tatsächlich auf einer Höhe zu sitzen, die zwischen seiner Abakusoberkante und der als Hohlkehle vortretenden vorderen Kante der Sohlbank des mittleren Tambourfensters²⁶ genügend Platz bietet, um eine Balkenlage einschließlich der über ihr die für die Decke erforderlichen Bohlen inklusive eines abschließenden Sandsteinplattenbelags unterzubringen, so daß ein Konflikt mit dem Fenster vermieden werden kann. Bei der relativ kurzen Spannweite über dem Ostumgang von 2.15 m hätten sogar normale Bohlen (σανίδες), die üblicherweise etwa 0.075 m stark sind²⁷, ausgereicht. Sehr deutlich ist das auch auf

der von U. Monneret de Villard abgebildeten Photographie der 1920 rekonstruierten Fassade zu erkennen, im Zuge derer man die Position der beiden inneren Pilasterkapitelle vermutlich nicht verändert hat²⁸. Die Unterkante der zu ergänzenden Balken dürfte der oberen Abakuskante des betreffenden rechten Pilasterkapitells entsprochen haben.

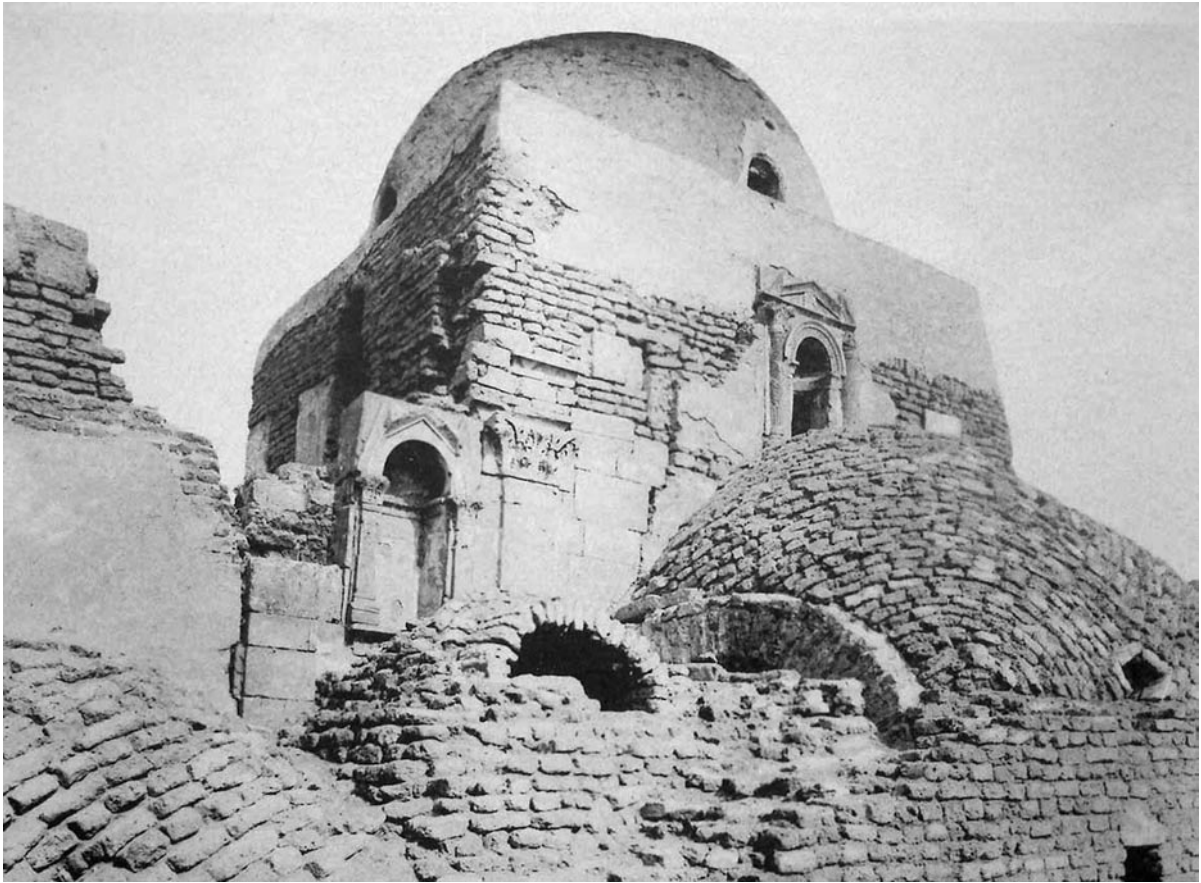
Hinzu kommt eine weitere Schwierigkeit. Etwas weiter außerhalb der genannten Pilaster, und zwar

²⁵ S.o. Anm. 11.

²⁶ Nach Ansicht von Clarke 1912, 168 ist mit dem Einsturz der Mittelpartie des Triumphbogens in der Sanktuariumsfassade auch dieses mittlere Fenster zu Schaden gekommen und kann folglich in seiner Position nicht mehr original sein. Es dürfte jedoch nach den erhalten gebliebenen übrigen Fenstern an der richtigen Stelle wieder eingesetzt worden sein.

²⁷ Sackur 1925, 178.

²⁸ Monneret de Villard 1925, Abb. 42.



Taf. 3: Überbau des Trikonchos mit Blick auf die vordere linke Fenster niche (nach W. de Bock 1901)

direkt über den Pilastern, die in ihrer Position den Kolonnaden im Naos entsprechen, haben sich auf beiden Seiten Reste von zwei weiteren Pilastern befunden, deren Höhe unbekannt ist. In der Restaurierung vom Jahre 1920 wurden die dazugehörigen Kapitelle auf gleicher Höhe wie die der vorgenannten Pilaster ergänzt, was U. Monneret de Villard mit Recht als verfehlt ansah, da es so nicht möglich sein würde, passende Innenaufleger für die Deckenbalken über den Emporen zu schaffen²⁹. Er ergänzt damit folgerichtig die Kapitelle der beiden äußeren Pilaster in einer bedeutend tieferen Position, worüber dann ein normaler Architrav folgen

würde, in dessen Oberlager die Balken der Emporendecke eingebunden werden konnten. Störend an einer derartigen Rekonstruktion ist freilich, daß zwei nebeneinander sitzende und in ihrer Schaftbreite voll übereinstimmende Pilaster von derart untergleicher Höhe gewesen sein sollten, doch führt kein Weg daran vorbei, daß sich die seinerzeit für diesen Bau verantwortlichen Bauleute über dieses Mißverhältnis hinweggesetzt haben.

Die hiermit vorgetragene Rekonstruktion des Dachs über dem Ostumgang als begehbare, mit der Decke über den Seitenschiffemporen übereinstimmende Flachdecke bietet noch einen weiteren Vorteil für die Gesamtreakonstruktion der Sanktuariumsfassade. In der Rekonstruktion von Monneret de Villard wurde das Giebeldach über dem Mittelschiff des Naos bis an den rechteckigen Tambour über dem Zentralraum des Trikonchos herangeführt, was zur Folge hat, daß die seitlichen Fenster des Tambours nur als innere Blindfenster ausgeführt

²⁹ Daß in der Tat die Deckenbalken über den Emporen auch in dem Abschnitt jenseits der Ostkolonnade auf derselben Höhe durchliefen wie im Naos der Kirche zeigt der von Evers-Romero 1964, Abb. R, publizierte Wandaufriß der Nordwand. Bei Monneret de Villard 1925, Abb. 39, ist der betreffende Bereich leider verschattet.

gewesen sein können³⁰, da sie von den Dachschrägen des Mittelschiffsdachs überschritten worden wären. In der von uns vorgeschlagenen Rekonstruktion wird das Problem vermieden. Mit dem Flachdach über dem Ostumgang können die seitlichen Fenster wieder geöffnet werden.

Wie man sich die Überdeckung des Zentralraumbereichs (Vierung) des Trikonchos vorzustellen hat, ist weniger eindeutig. Der Bereich bildet in seiner Grundfläche ein regelmäßiges Quadrat, was für die Konstruktion einer Kuppelwölbung spricht³¹, die auch ihrerseits baukünstlerisch als dem architektonischen Programm eines Trikonchos am gemäßigsten zu gelten hat. Allerdings hat in der Zeit, die für die Bauzeit der Kirche vorauszusetzen ist³², die Kenntnis der Kuppelkonstruktion, wofür in einem Land wie Ägypten nur eine im schalungsfreien Verband ausführbare Lösung in Frage kommt, noch nicht als hinreichend verbreitet zu gelten. Bekanntlich hat man beim Trikonchos der Kirche des Schenuteklosters noch auf den Bau einer Kuppel verzichtet und statt dessen ein hölzernes Giebel- oder Zeltdach über der Vierung errichtet³³. Zwar war man im 6. Jh. bereits um ein Jahrhundert weiter, doch handelt es sich bei den aus dieser Zeit überkommenen Kuppelkonstruktionen ausnahmslos um provinzielle Pseudokonstruktionen. Sie sind in großer Zahl vor allem aus den Mönchsniederlassungen in den Kellia bekannt³⁴. Technisch beherrscht wurde von den damaligen Bauleuten nur die sog. Hängerkuppel, die jedoch einfacher als eine Vollkuppel auszuführen war, aber in Sühāg wegen des einwandfrei horizontalen oberen Mauerabschlusses der Vierung nicht in Frage kommt³⁵. Hier konnte nur eine Konstruktion folgen, die ein horizontales Auflager voraussetzt. Die einzige Gewölbeform, die neben dem Klostergewölbe, das in Ägypten nie gebaut wurde, oder der über Eckbrücken konstruierten sog. Trompenkuppel, die erst später in Übung kam, diese Bedingung erfüllt, ist das sog. Pseudoklostergewölbe³⁶ mit zu einer Rundung verschliffenen Graten über den Ecken. Für die formale Gestalt eines derartigen Pseudoklostergewölbes gibt es keine Lehre. Sie konnte bei sorgfältiger Ausführung der Gestalt einer Halbkugel außerordentlich nahe kommen, aber andererseits auch erheblich davon abweichen. Wir haben uns im Rahmen unserer Rekonstruktion für eine Form entschieden, die am Bau von der Darmstädter Aufnahme festgestellt wurde³⁷ und weitgehend der Idealform einer Halbkugel entspricht.

Bemerkenswert ist darüber hinaus, daß die Krümmung der Halbkuppeln über den verschiedenen Konchen des Trikonchos nicht halbkreisförmig wie deren Grundrißformen in der Erdgeschoßzone ist, sondern oberhalb der oberen Architravzone vom Wölbungsansatz ab eine deutlich hufeisenförmige Grundrißgestalt beschreibt. Ob dieser Abweichung, die von einem unten stehenden Betrachter nicht wahrgenommen wird, ein besonderer bautechnischer oder baustatischer Gedanke zu Grunde liegt, ist unsicher, auf jeden Fall derzeit nicht erkennbar. Vermutlich ist dieser Wechsel wohl damit zu erklären, daß die Gewölbe von anderen Bauhandwerkern ausgeführt wurden als die aufgehenden Wände.

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³⁰ Nach den Beobachtungen von De Bock 1901, 65, sind die seitlichen Fenster nur vermauert.

³¹ Von Clarke 1912, 164, Taf. 50, allerdings entschieden in Frage gestellt.

³² Sie wird neuerdings für das 6. Jh. angenommen (Mittellung von H.-G. Severin).

³³ Clarke 1912, 152f.; sowie Monneret de Villard 1926, 71ff.

³⁴ Bei den in Kellia verbreiteten sog. Buckelgewölben (frz. *voûte en dos de tortue*; s. Bonnet/Bridel/Kasser 1994 und Bridel 2003, *passim*) handelt es sich generell um an beiden Enden gleichzeitig mit zunächst stark geneigten Ringschichten begonnene Tonnengewölbe, deren Neigung zur Mitte hin immer schwächer wurde, bis in der Mitte ein keilförmiger Spalt übrig blieb, der auf beliebige Weise geschlossen werden konnte, s. Henein/Wuttmann 2000, 101ff., Abb. 139, 3-15; sowie Grossmann 2003, 163, Abb. 193A.

³⁵ Nach Clarke 1912, 164 Taf. 50, wäre der obere horizontale Abschluß des Tambours allerdings erst neuzeitlich.

³⁶ Grossmann 2003, 164, Abb. 193C.

³⁷ S. Evers/Romero 1964, Abb. I.

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*The Incense Burner of Takrit: An Iconographical Analysis*¹

Amir HARRAK

INTRODUCTION

Among the well-known Christian antiquities is a bronze censer depicted with nine scenes from the life of Christ and used in private life and in the liturgy. There are about one hundred specimens coming from a variety of regions extending from Armenia to the north, Palestine and Egypt to the south and Anatolia and beyond to the west. They can be found in a variety of museums in the world, even as far as Toronto in Canada. A limited number of studies are devoted to them but the most detailed one is a doctoral dissertation presented by Ilse Richter-Siebels at the Free University of Berlin in 1990². This dissertation includes a valuable album of most of the incense burners, including the one of Takrit, though the author did not know its place of discovery.

The bronze censer of Takrit³, once the see of the Syriac Orthodox *mafriṭōnō*, was uncovered in the ancient and medieval citadel, and now housed in the Iraqi Museum under no. 11243/1⁴. In the 1990s Iraqi archaeologists dug the citadel, uncovering among others an extensive church with inscriptions, tombs, and most probably the incense burner subject of the present article. The censer shares with other censers the religious scenery but it is by far the best manufactured one, and the clarity of its depictions is amazingly preserved. This may suggest an early date in the absence of an inscription that could date it more precisely.

DESCRIPTION

The censer is round in shape, measuring 14.4 cm in height and 14 cm in diameter while the diameter of its base measures 6.2 cm. Its outer surface is divided into three unequal panels separated by filigreed bands: The top one, 1.3 cm in height, is blank, the middle one, 4.7 cm in height, contains the sacred scenery, and the bottom one, just above the base, is decorated with zodiacal figures. The

container is surmounted by three hooks to which three chains must have been attached in Medieval times; three more protrusions are also welded onto the censer's rim probably for symmetry.

There are nine new-testamental scenes on the Takritan censer, which will be quickly described in the following paragraphs:

1. The Annunciation (Pl. 1). The first scene in the middle panel of the censer is the Annunciation. Mary is shown seated on a high armchair, holding with one hand wool emanating from a basket located beside the chair, while the other hand rests on her chest. Her feet rest on a seemingly cushion given its top curvature. To her left side stands Gabriel the angel lifting his right arm in greeting and holding with his left hand a sceptre-cross. Both faces are frontally represented so as to be seen by the viewers.
2. Nativity (Pl. 2). In this scene Mary is seen lying down on a kidney-shaped mattress following the curvature of her body. Her left hand is placed against her left cheek, a gesture given to Joseph too, seen seated. Between the two holy figures stands the high manger in which the baby Jesus lies down. Two animals of which the heads and

¹ The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada has financially supported this research.

² Richter-Siebels 1990; I am grateful to Prof. Sheila Campbell for informing me about this dissertation and for lending her copy for consultation.

³ I would like to thank the Department of Antiquities of the Republic of Iraq for giving me the authorization to photograph and study the Syriac inscriptions and material from Takrit during the summers of 1997-1998. Dr. Mu'ayyad Sa'id al-Damerji, former Director General, Department of Antiquities, the late Mr. Rabi' al-Qaysi, former Director General, Department of Antiquities, Dr. Nawala al-Mutwalli, then Head of the Department of Cuneiform Studies, Iraqi Museum, and Dr. Donny George Yukhanna, then Head of External Relations, Iraqi Museum, were all very helpful in conducting my research in Iraq.

⁴ See Ḥamīd 1996, 223-232, including pictures.



Pl. 1. The Annunciation



Pl. 2. Nativity



Pl. 3. The Magi



Pl. 4. Baptism of Jesus

parts of the bodies are seen lean toward the manger.

3. The Magi (Pl. 3). Mother and Child are shown seated, Mary on a high armchair and Jesus on her lap. Three Magi holding their presents look toward Mother and Child, the one in the back pointing to the star of Bethlehem. The Magi are oriental, looking like Parthians with their trousers as obvious from the depiction of the two at the front.
4. Baptism of Jesus (Pl. 4). Jesus plunging into the water of the Jordan River is the centre of this

scene. To the left side, John the Baptist poses his right hand on the head of Jesus, baptizing him, and to the right side, two angels witness the event. The Holy Spirit like a dove descends toward Jesus, while a crescent is seen above the dove. The water is that of the Jordan river and the event is in the open as suggested by the tree behind John the Baptist.

5. Entry to Jerusalem (Pl. 5). Jesus is seen mounting a donkey in a marching movement. The halo around Jesus' head is of Byzantine type with the cross inside it. He is depicted frontally



Pl. 5. Entry to Jerusalem



Pl. 6. Crucifixion



Pl. 7. Resurrection



Pl. 8. Sceptical Thomas

unlike the two men before the animal, one laying clothing before Jesus and another holding a branch. All three males wear belts around their loins.

6. Crucifixion (Pl. 6). The Crucifixion scene includes crucified Jesus surrounded nearest to him by Mary and John and farthest to him and almost at the height of his extended arms by the two thieves, crucified on stakes. Jesus wears a tunic marked with folds and not merely a *colobium*. The sun and the moon are represented with human faces.

7. Resurrection (Pl. 7). The Holy Sepulchre does not refer to the burial of Jesus but to his resurrection. The sepulchre in this scene consists of the aedicule with its columned porch and perimeter of engaged columns. The scene does not show the angel with the two women as is in the case of the Lateran box, or two persons as in some other censers, but Jesus standing alone near one of the columns.
8. Sceptical Thomas (Pl. 8). In this scene Thomas is shown placing his hand in the side of Jesus, both standing inside a room with the door shut (John 20:24-29).

9. Ascension (Pl. 1). The scene shows Jesus standing in an aureole supported by angels, a depiction very much similar to the same scene in the sixth-century Rabbula Gospels. But the position of the hands is different and the depiction in the censer is more sober than the one of the Rabbula Gospels.

Unlike many other such incense burners, the one from Takrit is decorated along the lower side with three zodiacal figures: Sagittarius, ninth sign of the zodiac, followed by the fifth sign Leo, and then by the first sign Aries the ram. This triad is depicted three times over, and in addition, Sagittarius is shown at the bottom of the incense burner.

PROVENANCE

Though the incense burner subject of the present paper comes from Takrit, it may not have been made in Takrit. Its artistic repertoire bears no specific Takritan features though we now know much about the Christian iconographical and architectural heritage of Takrit brought to light less than two decades ago by Iraqi archaeologists⁵. Moreover, most of the divine scenery shown on our incense burner recalls one of the sixth-century Christian artistic traditions of Syria-Palestine, where the Byzantine influence is very strong despite the fact that local motifs managed to survive.

Thus, the Annunciation on the censer is almost a replica of the same scene produced in low relief on a gold medallion found in Egypt dated to the sixth century and probably originally from Constantinople. Here, seated Mary holds wool and before her, Gabriel the angel salutes her carrying a similar sceptre-cross⁶. The angel holding this type of sceptre-cross is not frequently attested in Christian and Syriac art, unlike the apostles and numerous saints depicted with the same type of sceptre. Thus, this common motif in both the medallion and the censer is quite significant.

The position of Mary and Joseph placing their hands against their cheeks, very frequently attested

in Christian art, is attested as early as the sixth century also in Palestine. This is the case of the painted wooden box placed under the altar in the sanctuary of the Lateran at Rome and that contains earth from the Holy Land. The lid of the box shows Joseph in the same position within a Nativity setting⁷. In the Rabbula Gospels completed at the monastery of Zagba around 586, Mary is seen in this same position. The scene of the Magi finds its echo in a silver flask from Palestine dated to the late sixth or early seventh century; in both cases Mother and Child are seated on a chair the arms of which extend upward and the Magi are positioned on the left side of the chair, though their features are not necessarily the same in both items⁸.

The censer of Takrit shows a sepulchre reminiscent of the one in the Lateran box⁹. Both depict the aedicule, though in the Lateran box the dome of Constantine's church of the Resurrection is added, a fact that suggests that the artist had a better idea about the architecture of the church than the artist who produced the censer. Nonetheless, the aedicule in the censer is more realistic than the baroque-looking aedicule of the Rabbula Gospels¹⁰. This suggests that while the Gospels of Rabbula were made in Northern Syria, the censer may have been produced in a place close to Palestine.

More striking, however, is the Ascension scene in the Lateran box, the Rabbula Gospels¹¹ and our censer, where Jesus is shown standing in an aureole surrounded by angels. Interestingly, Jesus is depicted standing in both the Rabbula Gospels and the Takrit censer, whereas in the Lateran box he is seen sitting. Though the Ascension motif is similar in both the Rabbula Gospels and the censer, the censer may have been manufactured in Palestine but at a later time than that of the Gospels.

Not only is the iconography common in sixth- and seventh-century Syro-Palestinian artistic repertoire and in the censer, the scenery is also basically the same. All the depictions pertain to the life of Jesus in the context of Palestine, and there is a remarkable absence of any non new-testamental or devotional motif, except perhaps for the zodiacal symbols in the censer that is in any case not part of its main scenery. The Birth in Bethlehem, Baptism in the Jordan River, Entry into Jerusalem, Crucifixion on Golgotha, and the Resurrection in Jerusalem all belong to the Holy Land and nothing is reminiscent of Takrit or Mesopotamia. Though the topog-

⁵ Harrak 2001, 11-40.

⁶ Beckwith 1970, 58, Pl. 43.

⁷ Beckwith 1970, 60, Pl. 44.

⁸ Beckwith 1970, 57, Pl. 42.

⁹ Beckwith 1970, 61, Pl. 44, upper register to the left side.

¹⁰ Beckwith 1970, 62, Pl. 45.

¹¹ Beckwith 1970, 61, Pls 44 and 63, Pl. 46 respectively.

raphy of Palestine is schematically represented – the Church of the Resurrection is a case in point – the censer aimed at merely hinting at the Holy Land for remembrance. On the basis of iconography and themes one may safely conclude that the censer may have been brought from Palestine to Takrit through trade.

Trade between Mesopotamia and Egypt via Syria-Palestine is well-known since distant times and the role of the people of Takrit in this trade is amply documented. Syriac manuscripts and inscriptions, including those in the Monastery of the Syrians in Wadi Natrun in Egypt, bear dedicatory notes of Takritans¹². These made several donations to the Monastery of the Syrians and presumably did the same to the churches of Takrit. During the 9th century, the trade activity was particularly intensive, since many of the notes mentioning Takritan monks and laymen are dated to that century. It is reasonable to believe that the censer was brought to Takrit by Takritan merchants who may have done pilgrimage in Palestine on their way to their native land. That these were indeed souvenirs from the Holy Land is suggested by the sheer number of incense burners, around one hundred, that share the same artistic repertoire. The fact that the censers are scattered around the Middle East and beyond also corroborates their commemorative nature. In this case, the censers share the fate of the Lateran box which was brought from Palestine to Rome as souvenir sometime during the late sixth or the beginning of the seventh century.

Nonetheless, the artistic skills reflected in the censers are not the same, and as a whole they reflect a variety of styles and influences, suggesting that at least some were produced in the lands where they are found on the basis of originals brought from Palestine at earlier times. This explains why some censers are inscribed in Syriac, Arabic, Coptic, Armenian, and Greek, though some inscriptions could have been added on original specimens. Since the censer of Takrit is of masterly manufacture, compared let us say with the censer of Mar Musa al-Habashi¹³, one can easily take it for an original and therefore defend furthermore its Palestinian origin.

DATE

The chronology of the censers as a whole proved to be controversial in modern research. Scholars dated them any time between the fifth and the

seventeenth centuries. Art alone cannot reliably contribute to the question of chronology, since religious art is very conservative, and certain motifs could have been used over long periods of time. The inscriptions are of no great help either, since the censers bearing them, even if they bear dates, can be made at one time and inscribed at a later time.

In 1974, R.W. Hamilton used minor decors in censers in an attempt to date them¹⁴. Such decors reflect not only local artistic traditions but also periods of time, and in fact he identified certain floral designs dated to the transition from the Persian to the Umayyad periods. Nothing in the censer of Takrit points to Syria or Mesopotamia during any specific period, including its most unique decorative element, the zodiacal signs. Indeed Sagittarius appears in Umayyad architecture in Syria, but the popularity of the zodiac is so well known that it is well attested in art throughout the centuries and across the entire Near East.

We can nonetheless confirm that the censer of Takrit cannot be dated after the fourteenth century, when Takrit ceased to be Christian. The monastery recently excavated by Iraqi archaeologists in the vicinity of this medieval city offered coins, the latest of which are of Caliph al-Nasir-li-din-Allah who ruled between 1180 and 1225¹⁵. The rule of this Caliph witnessed a progressive degeneration of Christianity in Takrit until it disappeared a century after him.

If the origin of the censer was Palestine and if it was indeed brought to Takrit through trade, a date between the eighth and ninth centuries is not far-fetched. The ties between Takrit and Egypt were the strongest at that time, and these centuries were the heyday of Syriac Christianity in that region of Iraq. The impressive churches and monasteries excavated in Takrit and in its vicinity are all dated to those and earlier centuries.

Some extant censers suffered deliberate disfiguration of their religious sceneries as a result of Iconoclasm during the eighth century. The fact that our censer has escaped this fate could indicate a date earlier than the eighth-century crisis. Some censers are copies of originals on account of their unskilled

¹² Rompay/Schmidt 2001, 44-46.

¹³ Richter-Siebels 1990, Pl. 47.

¹⁴ Hamilton 1974, 61-62.

¹⁵ Harrak 2001, 14.

depictions and peculiar artistic motifs which betray late manufacture in foreign lands. The very skilled depictions of the censer of Takrit suggest that the vessel is original, and moreover, corroborates a date close to the eighth or ninth centuries, if not even earlier.

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A propos d'une école syro-libanaise d'icônes au XIII^e siècle

Nada HÉLOU

Avec la collaboration de Mat IMMERZEEL

La présente étude traite d'une série d'icônes dont l'origine de quelques unes a été l'objet de grands débats. Or les opinions récentes qui ont attribué la provenance de certaines d'entre elles à la région syro-libanaise nous ont incité à aller encore plus loin dans notre analyse de ces œuvres et à confirmer, soutenir ou démontrer leur vraie origine. L'abondance de peintures murales dans cette région témoigne du rayonnement de l'art non seulement en Terre Sainte mais plus précisément dans le Mont Liban qui faisait partie du Comté de Tripoli. L'existence de cet art s'étale sur les deux siècles coïncidant avec le règne des Latins, le XII^e mais surtout le XIII^e siècle. La production d'icônes se concentre entre le milieu et le troisième quart du XIII^e siècle, c'est-à-dire jusqu'à la chute de Tripoli en 1289.

A cette époque la peinture en ses formes variées florissait dans tout le Proche Orient. L'art de la fresque, des manuscrits¹ ou de la peinture sur des planches de bois ou icônes, tout contribuait au plus grand essor en cette fin de règne des Latins en Terre Sainte et cette fin de siècle. Art chypriote, palestinien, croisé, syro-libanais ou encore sinaïtique, tous les styles et toutes les manières se rapprochaient et se confondaient à tel point qu'il devient souvent difficile de distinguer ou de déceler une école parmi les autres².

L'attention des chercheurs sur l'art de l'époque des Croisés n'a commencé qu'après le milieu du XX^e siècle avec des auteurs comme H. Buchtal³ et K. Weitzmann⁴ qui ont affirmé l'existence d'un art byzantino-latin en Terre Sainte. Cet art, qui prendra, plus tard, l'appellation d'art croisé, a été en général attribué à des artistes occidentaux imbibés d'influences byzantines et travaillant en terre orientale. Depuis, les études relatives à ce sujet, ont évolué et ont spécifié des ateliers ou des écoles qui ont parfois reçu le nom de manière telle *la maniera greca*⁵, *la maniera latina*⁶ ou encore *la maniera cypria*⁷. Aussi dans l'étude de l'art croisé l'influence palestinienne était toujours évoquée sous l'appellation d'atelier de Jérusalem ou d'Acre⁸.

Mais ce n'est qu'à partir des années 1990 qu'a été soulevée la question concernant l'influence syrienne dans l'art des Croisés avec des auteurs comme D. Mouriki ou L.-A. Hunt⁹. L'implication de la tradition syrienne dans cet amalgame complexe d'influences et d'échanges, à la base desquels était constitué l'art à l'époque des Croisés, a élucidé beaucoup de questions surtout en matière de style. Ceci est bien sûr, dû à l'intense intérêt porté par les chercheurs en ces dernières décennies à l'étude de la peinture monumentale en Palestine¹⁰, en Syrie¹¹ et au Liban à l'époque des Croisés. Les nouveaux ouvrages et

¹ Bien que la production de manuscrits enluminés ait été très active en Syrie au XIII^e siècle (voir Leroy 1964), il ne nous est parvenu aucun manuscrit enluminé remontant à l'époque des Croisés et appartenant aux communautés locales vivant dans le Mont Liban hormis les miniatures du manuscrit de Balamand (XIII^e siècle) illustrant l'histoire de Baalam et Joasaph mais qui, lui-même a été attribué à un atelier de Mossoul (ms no 147 (6); cf. Catalogue Paris 2003, 34-35; Smine 1993, X; Smine 1994, 12-36).

² Il est à noter que pendant la période mamelouke, celle qui a succédé au départ des Croisés en 1289 du Comté de Tripoli, on ne rencontre plus de production artistique chez les chrétiens ni au niveau de l'art pictural, ni au niveau des objets de culte. Ce phénomène a été étudié et confirmé par Mat Immerzeel et Adeline Jeudy dans: Immerzeel/Jeudy 2006.

³ Buchtal 1957.

⁴ Weitzmann 1963; Weitzmann 1966; Weitzmann 1976; Weitzmann 1984.

⁵ Weitzmann 1984.

⁶ Buchtal 1957.

⁷ Mouriki 1985-1986, 66-71, 76-77 (= Mouriki, 1995, 341-443); Mouriki 1990, 116-119.

⁸ Pour l'atelier de Jérusalem voir Buchtal 1957; Boase 1977, 117-139; Folda 1977; Mouriki 1990.

⁹ Hunt 1991a; Mouriki 1985-1986, 66-71 (= Mouriki 1995, 400-403); Mouriki 1990.

¹⁰ Boase 1977; Folda 1977; Folda 1982, 103-115; Folda 1995; Folda 2005; Hunt 1982; Kühnel 1988; Hunt 1991b.

¹¹ Cruikshank Dodd 1992; Cruikshank Dodd 2001; Folda 1982; Immerzeel 2004b; Leroy 1974-1975; Schmidt/Westphalen 2005; Westphalen 2000a; Westphalen 2000b.

recherches parus en ces deux dernières décennies sur les fresques du Liban avec des auteurs tels Y. Sader, A. Badwi, L. Nordiguian, M. Immerzeel, moi-même et bien sûr les recherches d'Erica Cruikshank Dodd couronnées par la récente parution de son livre sur les peintures murales du Liban¹², tous ont non seulement dévoilé l'art de toute une province restée jusque là méconnue ou même ignorée, mais ont déclenché une remise en question de certaines attributions d'œuvres d'art et plus particulièrement d'icônes. C'est précisément de ces icônes que traite notre article.

Dans une première recherche sur l'icône de Kaf-toun, conservée au monastère de la Vierge à Kaf-toun au Liban, nous avons démontré que celle-ci, avec d'autres icônes du monastère de Sainte Catherine qui lui ressemblent, provient de la région du comté de Tripoli et date du milieu-troisième quart du XIII^e siècle¹³. Ces conclusions ont été triées et confirmées par Mat Immerzeel qui, dans sa communication lors du symposium de Princeton en avril 2005 a fait connaître aux collègues américains et européens l'existence de cette icône clé¹⁴. Je crois que ce processus de redécouverte et de correction d'anciennes attributions ne fait que commencer.

Dans ses études sur les icônes du Monastère de Sainte Catherine au Sinaï dont la collection compte

plus de 2000 icônes, K. Weitzmann avait sélectionné autour de 120 icônes qu'il a assignées aux Croisés¹⁵. Parmi elles, il a spécifié une série d'une demi douzaine d'icônes qu'il a daté de la deuxième moitié du XIII^e siècle. Les différents aspects de leur style, se caractérisant par l'intrusion d'éléments étrangers à l'art proprement byzantin, et non caractéristiques de l'art européen, ont laissé le savant hésiter sur le problème de leur origine; c'est ce qui l'a mené à les attribuer à un seul artiste originaire soit d'Italie du sud, soit de Chypre ou de tout autre lieu sur lequel il n'a pas tranché. Ce même groupe d'icônes a été réexaminé par D. Mouriki dans le cadre de ses études des icônes de Chypre et de Sinaï à la fin des années 1980 – le début des années 1990, où, pour la première fois fut avancée la question d'une influence ou même d'une identité syrienne¹⁶. Cette hypothèse fut appuyée et développée ultérieurement par nombre de chercheurs tels L.-A. Hunt, A. Weyl Carr et L.J. Morrocco, J. Folda, M. Immerzeel et moi-même¹⁷.

LES ICÔNES DE «L'ATELIER DES SAINTS SOLDATS»

L'appartenance à un atelier syrien des deux icônes représentant des saints cavaliers – Serge sur l'une (Pl. 1) et sur l'autre, qui est biface, avec la Vierge Hodigitria d'un côté et les saints Serge et Bacchus de l'autre (Pls 2, 3) – du monastère de Sainte Catherine est incontestable¹⁸. Cependant dans ses récentes recherches Jaroslav Folda met l'accent sur l'appartenance «croisée vénéto-byzantine» du style de ces icônes qui ont été réalisées dans «The Workshop of the Soldier Saints» à Acre autour de 1260¹⁹.

Pour ne plus revenir à l'attribution de Weitzmann qui a été actuellement remise en question, il est toutefois intéressant, avant de passer à l'analyse des icônes proprement dites, de jeter un coup d'œil rapide sur l'art de l'Italie du sud et celui de Venise dans la seconde moitié du XIII^e siècle, date à laquelle remontent ces icônes.

L'art de l'Italie du sud au XIII^e siècle présente une ressemblance frappante avec les fresques du Liban. C'est précisément dans la région d'Apulie et de Calabre où vivait une grande communauté de Grecs et où existaient beaucoup de monastères grecs abritant des fresques à caractère non seulement byzantin mais monastique. Les fresques de l'église de Gravina (Apulie)²⁰ se rapprochent par leur hiératisme et schématisme des images des églises du Liban, d'autant plus qu'on retrouve ici et là

¹² Badwi 2000; Cruikshank Dodd 1982; Cruikshank Dodd 1997-1998; Cruikshank Dodd 2004; Hérou 1998; Hérou 1999; Hérou 1999-2000; Hérou 2003b; Hérou 2005; Immerzeel 2000; Immerzeel 2003; Immerzeel 2004a; Immerzeel 2004b; Nordiguian 1998; Nordiguian/Voisin 1999; Sader 1987; Sader 1997.

¹³ Hérou 2003a.

¹⁴ Interactions. Artistic Interchange between the Eastern and the Western Worlds in the Medieval Period. April 8-9, 2005, Princeton University; voir Immerzeel 2006.

¹⁵ Cf. n. 4.

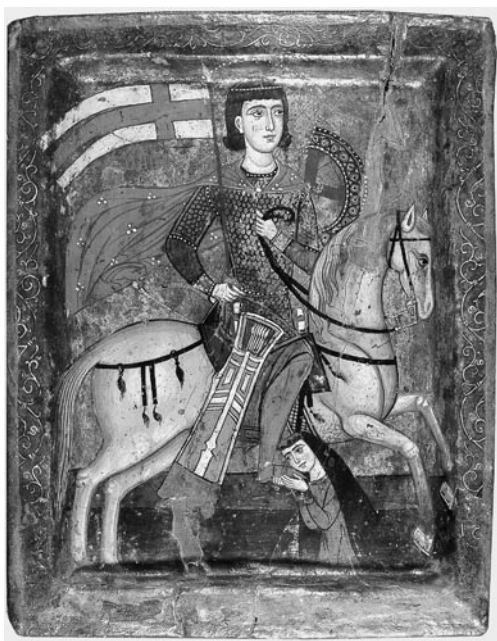
¹⁶ Mouriki 1985-1986, 66-71 (= Mouriki 1995, 400-403); Mouriki 1990, 117-120.

¹⁷ Folda 1992; Hérou 2003a; Hunt 1991a; Immerzeel 2003; 2004a, 49-53; 2005a; Weyl Carr/Morrocco 1991, 86-90.

¹⁸ Pour une description détaillée des deux icônes voir: Catalogue Martigny 2004, 100-106; Catalogue New York 2004, 373-375; Catalogue Saint Petersburg/London 2000, 252-254; Immerzeel 2004a, 57-58.

¹⁹ Dans Catalogue Martigny 2004, 100-106; Catalogue New York 2004, 373-375; Folda 2005, 338-342. Valentino Pace considère que les deux icônes ne sont pas l'œuvre d'un même artiste mais proviennent d'un même atelier (cf. Pace 1982, 246).

²⁰ Pace 1994, Fig. 126.



Pl. 1. Saint Serge, Sinaï, monastère de Sainte Catherine, v. 1250-1275, icône (reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai)



Pl. 3. Saints Serge et Bacchus, Sinaï, monastère de Sainte Catherine, v. 1250-1275, icône (reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai)



Pl. 2. Vierge Hodigitria, Sinaï, monastère de Sainte Catherine, v. 1250-1275, icône (reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai)



Pl. 4. Saint Serge, Qara, église de Saints Serge et Bacchus, mur nord, première moitié du XIII^e siècle, fresque (B. ter Haar Romeny)

le même motif d'arc enfermant les figures²¹. Dans l'église des Saints Pierre et Paul de Matera le pape Urbain II et l'évêque de Matera sont représentés avec leur mitre sur la tête à la manière occidentale alors qu'ils portent les *omophorions* à la manière byzantine²², deux éléments qui nous rappellent les deux évêques de l'église de Ma'ad²³. Certes ces fresques au style byzantinisant mais «archaïsant» se rapprochent les unes des autres; cependant l'on ne peut les relier directement et considérer que l'une a exercé son influence sur l'autre. Ce sont l'époque et la tradition byzantine qui les ont réunies.

Ce sont ces déductions même auxquelles arrive l'historien d'art italien Valentino Pace, qui dans ses recherches et ouvrages sur la peinture vénitienne et sud-italienne – telle l'Apulie, la Calabre ou la Sicile – décline l'idée de l'influence croisée sur cet art, approche si appréciée par Weitzmann, et reprise récemment par J. Folda²⁴. Pour Pace les ressemblances qu'on peut trouver dans l'art des deux extrémités de la Méditerranée (entre le Royaume Latin et l'Apulie) résident plutôt dans l'atmosphère commune qui régnait au XIII^e siècle dans le monde

chrétien du Bassin méditerranéen²⁵. L'auteur relie l'art d'Apulie à l'art byzantin de l'époque dont l'influence était ici très présente. Ces propos s'appliquent bien sûr sur l'art vénitien.

Il est connu qu'à cette époque Venise constituait un réceptacle de toutes les tendances artistiques et culturelles qui prospéraient en Europe et dans différentes régions d'Italie. Cette époque, le *ducento*, appelé aussi proto-renaissance, a été marquée par les premiers indices de la Renaissance; celle-ci naîtra dans un milieu médiéval roman où l'art gothique cherchait à se frayer passage. Dans ce contexte éclectique où concurrençaient différentes formes vient s'ajouter l'esthétique byzantine qui était d'ailleurs très présente dans la peinture vénitienne depuis longtemps mais qui obtint au XIII^e siècle, avec la prise de Constantinople, encore plus d'ampleur. De ce fait la tâche qui consiste à traiter avec cette période devient complexe et très délicate qu'il convient d'aborder avec précaution.

Mat Immerzeel dans son article «Icon Painting in the County of Tripoli of the Thirteenth Century» analyse d'une façon approfondie et convaincante l'origine syro-libanaise de ces icônes qui, selon lui, se localise plus précisément dans le Nord du Liban²⁶. Lucy-Anne Hunt, était la première à avoir lancé cette attribution et à prouver l'origine syrienne de l'icône de Saint Serge avec la donatrice se prosternant en bas à droite et de l'icône bilatérale des Saints Serge et Bacchus sur un côté et la Vierge Hodigitria sur l'autre²⁷. La ressemblance phénoménale des saints équestres avec ceux des fresques de l'église de Saints Serge et Bacchus à Qara (XIII^e siècle mais avant sa chute aux mains des Mamelouks en 1266²⁸) dans le Qalamoun en Syrie efface tous les doutes (Pl. 4)²⁹. Les similitudes se retrouvent aussi sur différents niveaux, mais tout d'abord à travers le sujet – celui d'un saint cavalier – qui ne se retrouve pas si souvent ni dans l'art byzantin, ni dans l'art d'Occident, mais qui est un thème très populaire dans l'art chrétien d'Orient (comme l'Égypte, la Cappadoce, la Géorgie, l'Arménie, la périphérie méridionale et orientale de la Grèce et enfin la Syrie et le Mont Liban)³⁰. Les détails les plus frappants sont la bannière blanche avec la croix rouge qu'ils tiennent sur le bout de leur lance, le diadème de perle qui serre leurs têtes et le contour en perles de l'auréole³¹. Ils sont de même reliés par d'autres détails de leurs vêtements comme la courte tunique en cotte de maille, la chlamyde volant au vent, avec la fibule rehaussée de perles et de pierres

²¹ Par exemple à Behdidat; Cruikshank Dodd 2004, Pl. LXXX.

²² Pace 1994, Fig. 164.

²³ Cruikshank Dodd 2004, Pls LXIX, LXXIIa.

²⁴ Pace 1982, 245-259, Pl. 10.1-10.7.

²⁵ Pace opte pour ce que Belting avait appelé «style international» entendant en cela une sorte de mélange de maniera greca avec la maniera latina, concernant le XIII^e siècle (cf. Belting 1978, 246; Pace 1982, 248-249).

²⁶ Immerzeel 2006.

²⁷ Hunt 1991a. Pace refuse toute identification de l'artiste à un Templier tel que Weitzmann l'avait suggéré (cf. Pace 1982, 247, n.17).

²⁸ Schmidt/Westphalen 2005, 34-37, 120-131.

²⁹ Immerzeel 2004a; Immerzeel 2006; J. Leroy qui a découvert ces fresques était le premier à avoir relié les saints cavaliers à l'icône sinaïtique (Leroy 1974-1975, 99, cité dans Immerzeel 2004a, 29).

³⁰ L'image des saints cavaliers est un sujet de prédilection dans les peintures murales de la Syrie et du Mont Liban (cf. Immerzeel 2003; Immerzeel 2004a).

³¹ Le contour en perles des auréoles a été attribué par certains auteurs aux Croisés. Certes la plus large expansion de ce motif se manifeste dans l'art à l'époque des Croisés. Toutefois je ne peux accepter complètement cette hypothèse car des nimbes entourés de perles ont toujours existé dans l'art byzantin depuis la période protobyzantine (à San Vitale à Ravenne, à San Apollinare Nuovo) comme aussi dans l'art médio-byzantin (dans les travaux en ivoires, à Sainte Sophie de Thessalonique, dans le manuscrit de Chludov etc.).



Pl. 5. Cheval, Rashkida, église de Saint Georges, mur nord, fresque (M. Immerzeel)



Pl. 6. Vierge Hodigitria, Kaftoun, monastère de la Vierge, v. 1250-1275, icône (d'après Lammens 1996, Pl. sur 21)



Pl. 7. Baptême du Christ, Kaftoun, monastère de la Vierge, v. 1250-1275, icône (d'après Lammens 1996, Pl. sur 27)



Pl. 8. Vierge de la Déisis, Kaftoun, église de Saints Serge et Bacchus, abside, v. 1250-1275, fresque (M. Immerzeel)

précieuses qui la retient sous le cou. Mais la plus grande ressemblance réside dans leurs chevaux au tracé fin et à l'allure gracieuse et légère, à la crinière large et au museau étroit, tout comme ils possèdent les mêmes yeux presque humains et les mêmes oreilles piriformes au dessin schématique.

Les figures sont dépourvues de poids. Le rendu d'ombre et de lumière est réduit au maximum. Les images manifestent un graphisme souligné mais se caractérisent par des contours d'une grande pureté où le trait et la ligne sont comme incisés. Immerzeel a bien démontré que tout ceci nous renvoie à certains modèles dans les fresques du Liban, comme les saints cavaliers de Behdidat ou ceux de Eddé Batroun qui sont en partie détériorés mais où on voit encore le dessin bien tracé des contours³². Le cheval encore conservé sur le mur nord de l'église de Saint Georges à Rashkida avec ses formes très réalistes montre une sensibilité aiguë dans l'observation de la nature qui s'apparente le plus avec les chevaux sur les deux icônes sinaïtiques (Pl. 5)³³. Mais il faut le noter, l'icône a subi plus d'une restauration qui ont supprimé ou effacé la couche supérieure et de ce fait les visages souffrent de manque de couleurs, sinon leur ressemblance avec les autres images aurait été plus frappante encore. Ainsi ces icônes proviennent incontestablement d'un atelier de peinture fonctionnant dans le comté de Tripoli³⁴.

Sur le revers de l'icône de Saints Serge et Bacchus est représentée la Vierge Hodigitria (Pl. 2). La fermeté du dessin et des contours, des traits du visage comme la forme en amande des yeux, les sourcils arqués qui se relient par une ligne au niveau du nez,

la petite bouche, bref les formes en «statuette de porcelaine» et tous les traits s'apparentent à ceux de Saints Serge et Bacchus et témoignent qu'il s'agit d'un même artiste qui a accompli les deux faces de l'icône. Ceci est de même souligné par le traitement global de l'icône où les jeux d'ombre et de lumière sont presque absents, et où des ombres brunâtres, à peine visibles, encadrent les visages. La tonalité brune dans laquelle plonge toute la composition tend vers une monochromie frappante qui contraste avec la diversité des couleurs de l'autre face où, dans la représentation des cavaliers, prédominent l'ocre et le rouge vif³⁵.

L'ICÔNE DE KAFTOUN

Beaucoup de traits communs de l'icône du Sinaï se retrouvent dans l'icône bilatérale du monastère grec orthodoxe de Notre Dame de Kaftoun (111 × 80 cm), au Liban³⁶. Sur une face est représentée la Vierge Hodigitria (Pl. 6) tandis que sur l'autre se déploie une scène de Baptême du Christ (Pl. 7). L'icône offre la même divergence de tonalité entre les deux faces où l'image de la Vierge baigne dans une tonalité sombre faisant contraste avec les couleurs vives qui distinguent le baptême représenté sur l'autre face. Nous avons démontré dans notre étude antérieure la provenance libanaise de cette oeuvre et son appartenance à la deuxième moitié du XIII^e siècle³⁷. D'ailleurs beaucoup d'autres traits communs rapprochent l'icône de Kaftoun avec l'icône bilatérale du monastère de Sainte Catherine (Pl. 2): la clarté des lignes et des compositions, la simplicité des formes qui se réduisent à un dessin colorié, et la quasi absence des modelés qui se ressemblent dans l'ensemble. Cependant il faudrait prendre en considération qu'ici aussi (dans l'icône du Sinaï), comme avec les saints cavaliers, le visage de la Vierge a perdu sa couche supérieure, de plus son manteau a été repeint³⁸. Sans ces interventions qui diminuent bien sûr de la splendeur de l'icône, la ressemblance avec celle de Kaftoun aurait été plus saisissante encore. Mais les figures des deux Vierges possèdent aussi le même ovale du visage où les sourcils, tels qu'on les a vus, forment une courbe se reliant par une ligne en V au niveau du nez. Celui-ci est étroit et droit, les yeux en amande forment un angle pointu sur les deux côtés, le cou en cylindre se cerne d'une ride, les doigts sont effilés et exagérément longs et le maphorion foncé est sillonné de rayures plutôt conventionnelles qui constituent les plis. Malgré ses proportions classiques et sa touche délicate, l'oeuvre

³² Immerzeel 2007.

³³ Immerzeel 2005.

³⁴ Hunt considère que ces icônes du Sinaï sont d'appartenance syriaque orthodoxe (Hunt, 2000, 79-80, 112) alors que Immerzeel les relie à un milieu melkite: attribution qui nous semble plus logique en raison de la concentration en cette région de cette communauté et en raison aussi du style qui se rattache plus à la *maniera greca* qu'à la *maniera syriaca*. La question de l'existence de ces deux manières dans les fresques du Liban était le sujet de ma communication au «The Syrian Renaissance Expert Meeting» qui a eu lieu à Nimègue du 2-4 juin 2005 (Hélou 2006).

³⁵ L'icône aurait été repeinte à une époque relativement tardive avec une tonalité brune, ce qui lui a donné cet aspect de monochromie (cf. Immerzeel 2007).

³⁶ Lammens 1996; Hélou 2003a, 101-131; Immerzeel 2004a, 49-53; Immerzeel 2006.

³⁷ Hélou 2003a, 127.

³⁸ Immerzeel 2007.

conserve un caractère monumental et sévère. Tous ces détails rapprochent les deux icônes et renforcent l'hypothèse de leur attribution non seulement à la même époque mais à la même école³⁹.

D'autre part, l'encadrement de l'icône de Kaftoun est ceint d'un motif de rinceau peuplé qui est constitué d'une matière comme le plâtre appelée *pastilio*, connue pour sa grande vogue à Chypre au XIII^e siècle⁴⁰. Cette matière qui décore les nimbes, les fonds et les rebords, imite, en réalité, les revêtements métalliques répandus à Byzance et qui sont beaucoup plus chers et plus somptueux. On retrouve donc le *pastilio* dans des icônes du Sinaï qui ont été attribuées elles-mêmes à la tradition chypriote. L'apparition de ce motif dans l'icône de Kaftoun, correspond plutôt à une influence chypriote.

Par conséquent la découverte de fresques en 2004 dans l'ancienne église de Kaftoun en ce même monastère où se trouve l'icône, a provoqué un incident remarquable⁴¹. Ici ont été dégagées de dessous l'enduit deux couches de peintures qui remontent toutes les deux au XIII^e siècle mais où l'une est légèrement plus récente que l'autre⁴². Les peintures de la deuxième couche, parmi lesquelles on retrouve dans la conque de l'abside une *déisis*, relativement en meilleur état de conservation, se rapprochent le plus des icônes déjà citées. Immerzeel a bien souligné la relation étroite qui réside entre la Vierge Hodigitria de l'icône biface du Sinaï et la figure de la Mère de Dieu dans la fresque (Pl. 8), tout autant que l'icône de Kaftoun⁴³. On y distingue le même ovale du visage, le même tracé du nez et de la bouche, la même expression de sérénité où dominent les aplats de couleurs malgré la fine ombre verdâtre autour de la face⁴⁴. D'un langage artistique plutôt sobre ces images, solennelles, calmes et monumentales sont empreintes d'une grande simplicité où l'émotion se voit réduite à l'extrême. Les formes sont massives, les lignes lapidaires, les détails rares ou même absents, tout aspire au laconique. Les icônes et la fresque appartiennent au même milieu artistique et peut-être au même atelier. Ceci a mené Immerzeel à attribuer l'icône biface du Sinaï avec la Vierge Hodigitria sur une face et Saints Serge et Bacchus sur l'autre, à cette même église de Kaftoun qui est actuellement connue pour être l'église des Saints Serge et Bacchus⁴⁵. Cependant l'on ignore si ce sont ces mêmes saints qui étaient les vrais patrons de l'église au Moyen Âge. Or le programmes du décor qui vient d'être mis à jour témoigne que l'église pouvait bien être dédiée aux Saints Serge et

Bacchus car les figures des deux saints occupent une place proéminente: elles sont représentées en pied sur les deux piliers, nord et sud, face à l'entrée. Ceci rend l'hypothèse de Immerzeel plus plausible sans exclure cependant l'idée d'un atelier de peinture se situant dans la région de Kaftoun.

Le Baptême du Christ figuré sur le revers de l'icône de Kaftoun présente une iconographie traditionnelle de la scène, cependant on voit apparaître au niveau des angles supérieurs deux personnages portant chacun un phylactère (Pl. 7). À gauche, au-dessus du Baptiste se tient le roi David tendant vers le centre un rouleau avec une inscription qui contient des vers des Psaumes 64 et 127. Celui-ci est écrit en arabe. En face, le prophète Isaïe tient un texte avec les Psaumes 1, 12:3 et 16 qui sont écrits en syriaque. Aussi faut-il noter les abréviations écrites en grec. La présence des deux prophètes dans la scène de baptême est très insolite dans l'art byzantin et je n'ai pu trouvé de parallèle que dans l'art post-byzantin où il ne se rencontre pas si souvent⁴⁶. Cependant on voit des illustrations représentant le Baptême du Christ dans les manuscrits byzantins contenant des textes relatifs aux psaumes qu'on vient de citer, ou

³⁹ Immerzeel 2007.

⁴⁰ Frinta 1981; Frinta 1986.

⁴¹ Deux campagnes de restaurations effectuées en août 2004 et août 2005 sous la direction de Tomasz Waliszewski et Krzysztof Chmielewski de l'Université de Varsovie (Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology of Warsaw University and Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw) avec la collaboration de la Direction Générale des Antiquités libanaise (D.G.A.) ont réussi à dégager toutes les fresques existantes sous l'enduit. Un rapport préliminaire concernant la découverte vient de sortir (cf. Hélou/Immerzeel 2005, 453-458). Comme il est prévu d'effectuer avec un nombre de spécialistes une monographie qui analyserait les peintures mais aussi qui étudierait le site des points de vue topographique, historique, archéologique et architectural.

⁴² Sur l'histoire du monastère au XII^e-XIII^e siècle voir: Jabre-Mouawad 2001-2002.

⁴³ Immerzeel 2006.

⁴⁴ M. Immerzeel relie aux fresques de Kaftoun et, plus précisément à la *déisis* de l'abside, les icônes de l'architrave de l'iconostase aux arcatures en ogive du monastère de Sainte Catherine et considère, éventuellement, que l'iconostase provient du même atelier. Cependant les figures ici, tel qu'il nous semble, avec leur traitement en modelé, sont plus d'inspiration byzantine qu'orientale ou syrienne. C'est pourquoi cet oeuvre n'a pas été incluse dans le groupe d'icônes qu'on étudie.

⁴⁵ Immerzeel 2007.

⁴⁶ Hélou 2003a, 104.



Pl. 9. Christ, détail du Baptême, Besharreh, église de Saydet ed-Derr, mur sud, XIII^e siècle, fresque (N. Hérou)

encore ces textes accompagnent la scène de Baptême. Apparemment les figures de prophètes accompagnant le Baptême proviennent d'une ancienne tradition byzantine ou, plutôt, orientale qui n'était pas très répandue et dont les prototypes n'existent plus. Les trois langues parues ici confirment la provenance syro-libanaise de l'icône; l'emploi de plus d'une langue est un usage courant dans la tradition de la peinture murale du Liban et de la Syrie⁴⁷. Cependant il

est à signaler que la présence d'une inscription en langue arabe, hormis le cas de Mar Mousa el-Habashi, où l'arabe n'est utilisé que dans les inscriptions dédicatoires⁴⁸, ne se rencontre que sur les murs de l'église de Kaftoun. Ici, parallèlement aux inscriptions en syriaque et en grec identifiant les personnages, il existe une inscription en arabe. Celle-ci devait courir tout au long de l'imposte qui fait le périmètre de la nef au niveau de la base de la voûte et de la conque de l'abside, mais dont il ne reste actuellement qu'une partie sur le mur nord et des traces infimes sur les autres parties. C'est l'unique église au Liban où l'on retrouve l'arabe coexistant avec le syriaque et le grec. Encore une fois cette similitude avec l'icône de Kaftoun ne peut être une simple coïncidence.

La scène de Baptême dans l'icône possède différents éléments qui appuient l'hypothèse de son origine locale. Tout d'abord la figure, quelque peu disproportionnée du Christ avec son corps à l'aspect artificiel lui donnant l'allure d'une sculpture en bois, le découpage en zigzag des contours des rochers, les ondulations purement décoratives suggérant l'eau

⁴⁷ C'est surtout à Ma'ad et à Eddé-Batroun au Liban que l'on retrouve des inscriptions éparses des deux langues, grecque et syriaque en lettres *estrangelo*, mais leur utilisation est loin d'être systématique (cf. Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 18-19, 322; Nordiguan/Voisin 1999, 333). Leur usage est cependant plus large en Syrie où on retrouve les deux langues côte à côte dans les peintures de l'église de Saints Serge et Bacchus ainsi qu'à Deir Mar Yacoub à Qara et à Deir Mar Mousa el Habashi près de Nebek (cf.; Cruikshank Dodd 1992, 67; Cruikshank Dodd 2001, 111-112; Leroy 1974-1975; Schmidt/Westphalen 2005, 139-152; Zibawi 1995, 92-93, Pls 18-19).

⁴⁸ Cruikshank Dodd 1992, 67; Cruikshank Dodd 2001, 111ff.



Pl. 10. Anges, détail de la Nativité, Kfar Hilda, Saydet el Kharaeb, XIII^e siècle, fresque (N. Hélou)

du Jourdain, les nimbes polychromes des anges et enfin la couleur très sombre – bleu marine foncé ou noire – du fond, tout concourt pour affirmer l'origine non byzantine de la composition.

Ici aussi des analogies peuvent être établies avec la peinture murale au Liban. La figure du Christ à Saydet ed-Derr à Bécharré (au Mont Liban nord), qui est l'unique scène de Baptême encore conservée au Liban, s'apparente avec celle de l'icône de Kaftoun qui possède les mêmes caractéristiques avec son allure figée, le corps en aplat et la structure linéaire (Pl. 9)⁴⁹. L'image du baptisé est teinte en une couleur unie, ocre-rouge, tandis que le dessin très sommaire du contour, la détache du fond. Comme à Kaftoun un tracé géométrique très conventionnel souligne les muscles et les différentes parties du corps. Dans les deux compositions les formes simplifiées et naïves confèrent aux visages une certaine expressivité qu'il est difficile de retrouver dans une icône byzantine et qui concou-

rent avec la tradition orientale. D'autre part Immerzeel a décelé une autre comparaison avec les fresques: celle-ci se trouve entre le premier ange du Baptême de Kaftoun qui s'avance en tendant les mains vers le Christ et l'ange du Jugement dernier, très fragmentaire, de la fresque de Deir Hammatoura près de Kousba⁵⁰. Si on retourne celui-ci en sens inverse on décèle une grande ressemblance: la même attitude, le même motif géométrique des plis et le même effet de rehauts sur les vêtements qui rapprochent les deux figures comme deux jumelles. Tout ceci a mené Immerzeel à déduire que l'icône fut produite dans un atelier spécialisé en peinture murale. Certes, prenant compte de

⁴⁹ Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 90, 239; Nordiguian/Voisin 1999, 286-287.

⁵⁰ Immerzeel 2003-2004, 177, 181, 183; Immerzeel 2004a, 25, Pls 12-13.

l'intense activité en peinture murale au cours du XIII^e siècle en région syro-libanaise, il est difficile de concevoir une séparation entre les ateliers de peinture murale et ceux des icônes.

Aussi faudrait-il signaler la ressemblance qui réside entre les anges du Baptême dans l'icône avec ceux de la Nativité de la fresque de Saïdet el-Kharaeb à Kfar Hilda. Il s'agit ici d'une ancienne église presque en ruine qui a été sujette à une époque indéterminée à un incendie qui a ravagé une grande partie des fresques et où il ne reste que quelques fragments d'une Nativité et la moitié du corps de Saint Dométios dont le visage n'existe plus⁵¹. Ce sont de très belles fresques exécutées dans un style très byzantinisant qui se rapproche de celui des fresques de Kaftoun, mais encore plus de l'icône. On y voit les visages des deux anges encore visibles de la Nativité avec leurs formes rondes traitées en volume, les ombres délicates cernant leurs faces et surtout avec les carnations constituées de trois lignes sous les commissures des yeux, d'une ligne ondulée au-dessus des sourcils, ou encore au-dessus de la lèvre supérieure et sur le menton marquant ainsi des formes en relief (Pl. 10).

Ainsi l'on peut maintenant affirmer que l'icône de Kaftoun, tout autant que les deux icônes avec les saints cavaliers, ont été effectuées dans le territoire du Comté de Tripoli et plus précisément dans la région se situant dans sa moitié nord. Celui qui l'a peinte est incontestablement un artiste local qui est bien informé de l'art byzantin ou plus précisément de la tradition chypriote. Celle-ci était bien connue en territoire syro-libanais; plusieurs ensembles de fresques encore conservés l'attestent: ce sont les peintures de Mar Phocas à Amioun, de Hammatoura, de Barghoun, de Rashkida, de Saint Dimitrios à Kousba ou encore celles de l'ancienne couche à Eddé Batroun (au Liban), et celles de Ma'arrat Saïdnaya en Syrie⁵².

IMAGES DE LA VIERGE: LA *BLACHERNITISSA* ET LA *PLATYTERA*

Une autre oeuvre du Sinaï, pouvant appartenir à ce groupe d'icône qui ont été appelées 'croisées', est l'icône de la Vierge *Blachernitissa* (99,2 × 67 cm), ou Vierge du Signe (Pl. 11)⁵³. C'est le type de la Vierge se tenant en orante avec le Christ Emmanuel dans un médaillon au niveau de sa poitrine. Ici la Théotokos est représentée rigoureusement de face, les bras resserrés contre le corps, et les deux mains levées juste au niveau des épaules et non écartées loin du corps, tel qu'exige la tradition byzantine où, le tracé des bras est très significatif et symbolise le calice contenant le Christ Emmanuel, à l'image du calice eucharistique. Déjà cet écartement de l'iconographie byzantine témoigne de l'origine provinciale de l'icône. D. Mouriki avait bien noté qu'il s'agit là d'une oeuvre provenant non



Pl. 11. Vierge *Blachernitissa*, Sinaï, monastère de Sainte Catherine, v. 1250-1275, icône (reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai)

⁵¹ Ces fresques qui ont été attestées pour la première fois en 1973 par Hassan Salamé-Sarkis dans une note à la D.G.A. puis mentionnées dans une brochure du Ministère du tourisme (cf. Salamé-Sarkis 1997, 17) ont été redécouvertes et publiées par Lévon Nordiguian (cf. Nordiguian 2005).

⁵² Immerzeel 2005.

⁵³ Hélou 2003a, 118, Fig. 5; Immerzeel, 2005. Pour la description et les références voir: Catalogue Martigny 2004, 107-109; Catalogue New York 2004, 352-353; Catalogue Saint Petersburg/London 2000, 239-241.

pas d'un atelier croisé, comme l'avait avancé Weitzmann⁵⁴, mais plus exactement d'un milieu orthodoxe de la Méditerranée de l'Est où les éléments chypriotes et syriens sont bien évidents⁵⁵.

En effet, plusieurs caractéristiques affirment l'origine orientale et, plus précisément, syrienne de cette icône: la silhouette sombre qui se détache harmonieusement sur le fond doré, la clarté géométrique de la composition, l'attitude strictement symétrique et figée de Marie, l'expression de dignité paisible dans le visage et l'austérité du regard. Ce n'est pas par hasard que Immerzeel compare cette figure de la Théotokos à celle de la fresque de Ma'arrat Saïdnaya où l'auteur y voit la main d'un artiste chypriote⁵⁶. Toutes ces images nous rappellent la Vierge de Kaftoun avec la frontalité de la figure, la rigidité de la pose, l'absence de volume, le détachement du regard et la prédominance de la teinte brune sur toute la planche. Les deux figures possèdent des visages qui se caractérisent par un dessin sûr et net, une expression qui semble imperturbable, impassible et presque immobile. La manière de ces deux icônes, leur facture, leur typologie et l'expression de leurs visages renvoient à l'icône de la Vierge Hodigitria du même monastère et qu'on vient d'étudier (Pl. 2). Aussi faut-il remarquer que ces trois oeuvres se rencontrent par leur format aux dimensions remarquables. Ces trois icônes proviennent indubitablement d'une même école et, peut-être même, d'un seul atelier. Toutefois l'apparition du fond doré avec des médaillons luisants semble, d'après Mouriki, se relier à une ancienne tradition sinaïtique, car ce procédé est étranger à l'art syrien et l'artiste aurait exécuté l'icône sur place⁵⁷. Mais, vu le nombre très réduit des icônes conservées, remontant à l'école syrienne, on ne peut confirmer cette déduction, par contre on peut trancher sur le lieu d'exécution de l'oeuvre qui devrait se confondre avec celui de la Vierge de Kaftoun et l'icône de la Vierge Hodigitria et des saints cavaliers.

Deux anges de dimension réduite occupent les angles supérieurs du panneau: ils sont représentés jusqu'aux hanches tendant les mains vers la Vierge et portant dans leurs mains droite un encensoir. Ces mêmes anges occupant le même emplacement et possédant une taille et une pose similaire se retrouvent dans l'icône de Kaftoun, mais ici les anges regardent la Mère de Dieu en signe d'adoration. Doula Mouriki dans son étude des icônes de Chypre considère que la figuration des anges dans les angles de la scène et encensant le Christ ou la Vierge

provient d'une tradition occidentale⁵⁸. Certes les éléments ou détails venus de l'Ouest latin n'ont jamais été exclus de la peinture syro-libanaise⁵⁹. Ainsi l'image des anges à l'encensoir qu'on retrouve fréquemment dans les icônes sinaïtiques et dans l'art chypriote (tant dans les icônes que les fresques) ou en adoration comme dans l'icône de Kaftoun témoigne incontestablement d'une tradition de l'est de la Méditerranée au XIII^e siècle. Mais la ressemblance typologique et stylistique des anges sur les deux panneaux confirme une fois de plus leur parenté.

On ne peut passer dans le sillage de ces images de la Vierge sans évoquer une icône du Sinaï avec la représentation de la Théotokos et l'Enfant sur ses genoux. Cette icône très peu connue, n'a été publiée qu'en noir et blanc par les Sotiriou et Folda⁶⁰. Le panneau, de dimensions limitées (43 × 31 cm), renferme la figure de la Vierge qui se trouve à l'intérieur d'un encadrement en forme d'arc brisé gravé dans la profondeur du panneau, détail provenant probablement d'une influence occidentale. Les angles supérieurs sont comblés par les figures des prophètes David et Abacum qui portent chacun un phylactère avec une inscription en grec; sur l'une l'on lit «écoute ma fille», sur l'autre «le Prophète Abacum». Les deux patriarches rappellent ceux de l'icône de Kaftoun non seulement par leur présence dans les angles supérieurs mais par leurs poses et attitudes, comme aussi par le traitement de leurs visages et leurs vêtements⁶¹. De plus l'angle inférieur de droite est occupé par la figure d'un homme agenouillé en pose de prière, il porte un turban sur la tête et la tenue monacale; il n'existe pas d'inscription l'identifiant,

⁵⁴ Weitzmann avait considéré que tout ce groupe d'icône appartient à un atelier croisé. Il n'avait pas alors distingué les différences des styles qui résident dans ces panneaux (cf. Weitzmann 1966, 73-74 = Weitzmann 1982, 347-348).

⁵⁵ Mouriki 1990, 117-118, Fig. 61; E. Bakalova appuie cette hypothèse (cf. Catalogue Martigny 2004, 108; Catalogue New York 2004, 253).

⁵⁶ Immerzeel 2005, 179.

⁵⁷ Mouriki 1990, 117.

⁵⁸ Mouriki 1995, 376-377.

⁵⁹ Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 96-99; Immerzeel 2004a, 29-60.

⁶⁰ Folda 2005, 354, Fig. 210; Sotiriou/Sotiriou 1956-1958, I, Figs 171-172, II, 157-158.

⁶¹ Les Sotiriou considèrent que la présence de prophètes sur la partie supérieure de l'icône provient d'une tradition post-byzantine, or l'icône de Kaftoun offre le même motif et est datée de la deuxième moitié du XIII^e siècle (cf. Sotiriou/Sotiriou 1958, II, 171).

mais ses vêtements nous renseignent qu'il s'agit d'un moine arabe qui serait lui même celui qui a fait la commande.

La Vierge, au visage détérioré, est du type *Platytera*, elle est assise avec l'Enfant sur ses genoux, image assez fréquente, comme on vient de voir dans les fresques du Liban. Le trône, aux contours simples est constitué de formes carrées, le siège est couvert d'un motif répétitif de deux cercles l'un dans l'autre et sertis de perles; les supports sont garnis d'un motif végétal stylisé rappelant la fleur de lys qui alterne avec une fleur à quatre pétales. Ces motifs ne sont pas inconnus dans les fresques du Liban, mais le motif de cercle qui décore le siège et le drap blanc à rayures rouges et les coussins, se retrouve dans celui de la Vierge à l'église de Rashkida⁶². Il est de même évident que le traitement en aplat des formes et des couleurs, la symétrie et la frontalité de la pose, les motifs décoratifs stylisés et très simplifiés rapprochent l'icône des fresques du Liban. Cette icône, l'icône de Kaftoun aussi bien que les autres icônes du Sinaï qu'on vient d'étudier, appartiennent sans conteste à un même milieu et une même époque, les prophètes et le moine au turban affirment cette provenance.

Il est à noter que parmi les quelques icônes (autour de neuf) qu'on étudie, on a retrouvé quatre représentations de Vierges, soit deux Hodigitria, une *Platytera* et une *Blachernitissa*, ce qui témoigne de la vénération particulière accordée à la Mère de Dieu et, plus particulièrement, à ces types iconographiques consacrant le thème de l'Incarnation du Verbe divin en cette région. D'ailleurs le nombre relativement important de ces types de Vierge se retrouve dans les fresques de plusieurs églises de la Syrie et du Liban: à Ma'arrat Saïdnaya et à Saint Serge et Bacchus à Qara (en Syrie)⁶³, à Kfar Qahel, Barghoun, Rashkida, Eddé Batroun, Beyrouth, Bkeftine, Hammatoura et à l'église de Notre Dame de Kousba (au Liban)⁶⁴. Dans ces trois dernières, on remarque une certaine ressemblance avec l'icône sinaïtique. Ici l'on peut discerner, malgré leur grande détérioration, la même rondeur du visage chez l'Enfant aux joues gonflées, au front haut et aux cheveux tassés. Ce rapprochement des quatre



Pl. 12. Sainte Marina, Texas, collection Menil, 1250-275, icône (d'après Folda 1992, Fig. 13)



Pl. 13. Sainte Marina, Pedoulas, église de la Sainte Croix, deuxième moitié du XIII^e siècle, icône

⁶² Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 273, Pls LII, LIII, 14.4, 14.5; Nordiguian/Voisin 1999, 300, 301, 406-407.

⁶³ Ma'arrat Saïdnaya: Immerzeel 2005, 162, 173, Pls 19b, XIIb, XIIIb, XIVb; Qara: Leroy 1974-1975, 100-102.

⁶⁴ Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 36-37, 42-46.

oeuvres prouve, une fois de plus, la provenance syro-libanaise de cette icône. De plus, le nombre, relativement, non négligeable de Théotokos dans les icônes affirme non seulement leur lien avec les fresques du Liban mais souligne la popularité du culte de la Mère de Dieu en cette région qui a toujours voulu affirmer sa foi en l'Incarnation.

AUTRES ICÔNES

L'origine d'une autre icône, celle de Sainte Marina de la collection Menil au Texas, a reçu plusieurs attributions avant d'être localisée par J. Folda dans le comté de Tripoli et datée, par lui, du milieu-deuxième moitié du XIII^e siècle (Pl. 12)⁶⁵. Cette icône, en dépit de l'aspect très byzantin qu'elle présente, possède des traits strictement orientaux. Ceux-ci se révèlent dans le traitement général de la peinture qui se distingue par l'absence de volume et la prédominance du rythme plat. La sainte, en elle-même, jouit d'une vénération particulière dans le Mont Liban ou, plus précisément dans le Nord du Liban, le lieu où se déroule son histoire⁶⁶.

L'icône peut être associée à une autre icône de la même sainte qui provient de l'église de Pédoullas en Chypre, et qui daterait autour de 1275 (Pl. 13)⁶⁷. Ces deux œuvres se relient par leur grande ressemblance, mais se distinguent fondamentalement: l'image chypriote se caractérise par son dessin plus raffiné et plus délicat, comme elle se distingue par son traitement global, qui lui confère un aspect plus classisant. Ces caractéristiques sont plus conformes à l'art chypriote dans lequel la tradition byzantine est fortement ancrée.

J. Folda assimile l'icône de Sainte Marina de la collection Menil aux fresques des églises de Saydet ed-Derr, Behdidat, Ma'ad et Eddé Batroun dans le Mont Liban⁶⁸. Effectivement des traits communs se signalent partout, surtout chez les saints imberbes: dans le contour ovale des visages qui est doublé d'une couche verdâtre en guise d'ombre, ainsi que dans l'arc des sourcils se reliant au niveau du nez, dans, aussi, la fine courbe des paupières très caractéristique des fresques du Liban, au-dessous de laquelle s'ouvrent de grands yeux en amande avec le trait supérieur qui continue sur le tympan. De plus on retrouve, aussi bien, dans l'icône de Marina que dans les fresques le même tracé du nez, de la bouche et de l'ombre sur la lèvre supérieure constituée par la saillie du nez. Comme dans la fresque de Sainte Salomée à Saydet ed-Derr au Liban

nord⁶⁹, la draperie du maphorion se réduit à un strict coloriage rouge qui est strié de lignes d'un rouge plus foncé qui constituent les plis. Mais on retrouve la ressemblance la plus frappante dans la figure d'une sainte non identifiée de Hammatoura qui se tient en pose de supplication et se dirige vers la Vierge trônant (Pl. 14)⁷⁰. La sainte est vêtue d'un manteau rouge qui couvre toute la figure de la tête aux pieds mais laissant apparaître le canevas bleu qui lui entoure le visage. Les doigts minces et effilés autant sur l'icône que dans la fresque rapprochent davantage les deux figures. Malgré la détérioration de la fresque, où une grande partie de la tête est complètement détruite et où, l'inscription qui devait l'identifier n'existe plus, l'on peut discerner une grande ressemblance avec l'icône de Sainte Marina de la collection Menil et, de ce fait, il devient plus facile d'identifier la figure sur la fresque comme étant celle de Marina d'autant plus que le monastère de Hammatoura se trouve dans la vallée de la Qadisha, là où est localisée l'histoire de la sainte. Si l'aspect de l'icône trahit l'origine byzantine du prototype, l'impression générale qu'elle crée est l'expression de la contemplation silencieuse, et l'absence d'émotions violentes. Le regard détaché et l'attitude figée accentuent cette sensation de paix intérieure.

Cette même impression se retrouve dans le visage de la même sainte représentée en pied avec Sainte Catherine qui lui fait pair dans une icône du Sinaï (Pl. 15)⁷¹. Weitzmann avait dénombré parallèlement à celle-ci, deux autres icônes du Sinaï, peut-être y en a-t-il plus, qui possèdent, toutes les trois à peu près les mêmes dimensions, qui représentent des saints debout en une pose très frontale et qui se rapprochent, toutes, par leur style. A part cette icône avec Sainte Catherine et Sainte Marina, la seconde représente Saint Syméon Stylite et Sainte Barbe⁷² tandis

⁶⁵ Folda 1992, 106-111, Fig. 33; Folda 2005, 334-336, Fig. 192; Hérou 2003a, 120, Fig. 8.

⁶⁶ Cheikho 1984, I, 2, 38; Fiey 1978, 33-34; Sauma 1994, II, 53-61.

⁶⁷ Mouriki 1995, 368, Figs 37, 43.

⁶⁸ Folda 1992, 118-123; Folda 2005, 335.

⁶⁹ Cruikshank Dodd 2003, 78-79, 240, Pls XXXV, 11.6, 7, 8, 11; Nordigian/Voisin 1999, 339.

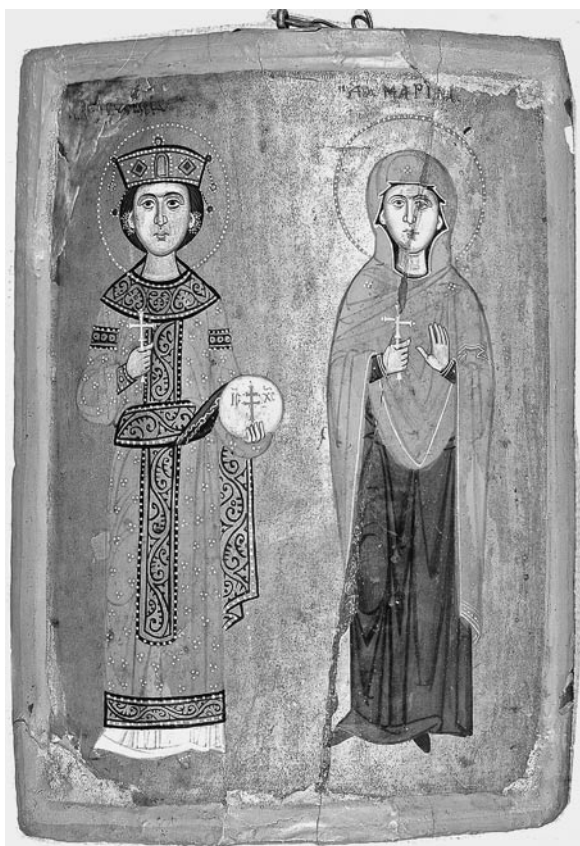
⁷⁰ Immerzeel 2003-2004, 177.

⁷¹ Folda 2005, 337, Fig. 195; Sotiriou/Sotiriou 1956-1958, I, 169, II, Fig. 183; Weitzmann 1966, 72-73, Fig. 50 (= Weitzmann 1982, 346-347).

⁷² Folda 2005, 336-337, Fig. 193; Sotiriou/Sotiriou 1956-1958, II, 169, I, Fig. 184; Weitzmann 1966, 70-71, Figs 46, 47 (= Weitzmann 1982, 344-345).



Pl. 14. *Sainte Marina, détail de la Déisis, Hammatoura, monastère de la Vierge, mur nord, première moitié du XIII^e siècle, fresque (M. Immerzeel)*



Pl. 15. *Saintes Marina et Catherine, Sinai, monastère de Sainte Catherine, v. 1250-1275, icône (reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai)*

que la troisième reproduit trois saints soldats qui sont Georges, Théodore et Démétrios (Pls 16-17)⁷³. Ces trois oeuvres se ressemblent tellement que Weitzmann les a attribuées à un seul artiste d'origine occidentale, celui-là même qui a effectué les icônes des saints cavaliers et dont la patrie serait, tel que l'auteur propose, Apulie, Venise ou Chypre, tout en laissant le débat ouvert en faveur d'une interprétation plus précise⁷⁴.

⁷³ Folda 2005, 338, Fig. 196; Weitzmann 1966, 71, Fig. 48.

⁷⁴ Weitzmann 1966, 73-74 (= Weitzmann 1982, 347-348). Plus tard J. Folda, établissant une comparaison entre Sainte Marina de la collection Menil et la Sainte dans l'icône sinaïtique trouve des points communs tout en remarquant des distinctions entre l'art des icônes du Sinai et celui de l'icône de la collection Menil (Folda 1992; Folda 2005, 337).

⁷⁵ Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 47-48, Pls LXXX, 19.12, 13, LXXXIII, 19.24; Nordguian/Voisin 1999, 254-255.

Les visages des figures, féminines comme masculines, sont stéréotypés. La grande simplicité des compositions qui sont d'un schématisme marqué, évoque les miracles et l'ascèse de ces saints. Ces images, dépouillées et sobres, ignorent les subtilités psychologiques et la profondeur spirituelle; elles visent plutôt à traduire leur grandeur d'âme et appellent les fidèles à croire en leur intercession. Les proportions des visages, le modelé réduit des formes, l'absence de poids et de volume, ainsi que l'expression sereine et recueillie des visages, nous rappellent certaines figures de Behdidat⁷⁵. Les visages imberbes des saints jeunes de l'église de Behdidat peuvent être reliés à ceux des saintes femmes dans les icônes. Par exemple, l'image de Saint Thomas ou de Saint Philippe (Pl. 18) se rattache à celle de Catherine, Marina ou Barbe tout d'abord, à travers le traitement bidimensionnel des compo-



Pl. 16. *Saint Syméon Stylite et Sainte Barbe, Sinaï, monastère de Sainte Catherine, v. 1250-1275, icône (reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai)*



Pl. 17. *Saints Georges, Théodore et Dimitrios, Sinaï, monastère de Sainte Catherine, v. 1250-1275, icône (reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai)*

sitions qui prédomine et qui rapproche ces figures entre elles mais aussi avec Marina de la collection Menil. Le même dessin sommaire et laconique qui distingue ces icônes se retrouve dans la fresque où les figures se découpent à même le fond qui est abstrait et dépourvu de tout motif. Les visages, à la forme ovale mais large, aux grands traits scrupuleusement dessinés, où le jeu d'ombre et de lumière se réduit à une gradation verte sur le contour de la face, révèlent un type oriental marqué. Ces images, silencieuses dans leur hiératisme expriment une vision austère et ascétique du monde spirituel. Tout ceci relie les figures de ces icônes aux types orientaux tels ceux de Behdidat plutôt qu'à la tradition byzantine, bien que celle-ci reste fortement présente et se manifeste autant dans les types iconographiques que dans la délicatesse du traitement.

LES RELATIONS AVEC CHYPRE

Parallèlement à ce type de Behdidat on retrouve une ressemblance phénoménale des saintes femmes figurées sur les deux icônes avec leurs homologues dans les fresques de Moutoullas (datées de 1280) à Chypre où, sur le mur ouest sont représentées, debout en pied, des saintes femmes dont, parmi elles, Sainte Marina et Sainte Barbe (Pl. 19)⁷⁶. La dernière porte des vêtements princiers typiques de la tradition byzantine et qui sont très semblables à ceux de l'icône avec le même motif de rayures de perles formant des losanges sur le manteau de la sainte qui est attaché au niveau de la poitrine par une grosse broche. La ressemblance des deux images se retrouve même dans les coiffes – ronde dans l'icône, plate aux angles arrondis dans la fresque –,

⁷⁶ Mouriki 1984, 197.



Pl. 18. *Saint Thomas, Behdidat, église de Saint Théodore, paroi absidale, deuxième moitié du XIII^e siècle, fresque*

qui sont toutes les deux couvertes d'un voile transparent qui descend sur les côtés et qui se rattacherait à une mode occidentale⁷⁷. Aussi faut-il noter que les maphorions des religieuses, chez Marina, dans la fresque, comme dans l'icône de la collection Menil, ainsi que dans les figures des Saintes Mavria et Anastasia dans la fresque de Moutoullas, sont toutes décorées de trois crosselets, un sur la tête et deux sur les épaules. Les trois crosselets, ou étoiles, dans l'art byzantin se relient uniquement aux images de Marie et symbolisent sa virginité avant,

pendant et après l'enfantement. Ceci provient d'une ancienne tradition syrienne quand ces signes étaient brodés sur le voile nuptial des princesses. La persistance de l'ancienne tradition syrienne à travers ces figures de saintes met en évidence l'éventuelle provenance orientale⁷⁸.

Les fresques de Moutoullas surprennent par leur aspect strictement provincial qui est loin de ressembler ou de dériver des anciennes fresques du XII^e siècle de Chypre dont le style était marqué par son classicisme byzantin⁷⁹. Il est à noter que l'existence de peinture murale dans l'île au XII^e siècle, c'est-à-dire la période qui a précédé l'arrivée des Croisés, avait atteint une expansion très large de telle sorte qu'on dénombre actuellement plus d'une quinzaine d'ensembles de fresques relativement conservées remontant à cette période⁸⁰. Mais par rapport au siècle précédent, le nombre d'églises à fresques datant du XIII^e siècle s'est considérable-

⁷⁷ Mouriki 1984, 197.

⁷⁸ Mouriki ne parle pas d'origine syrienne mais évoque le style non byzantin des fresques comme elle remarque aussi l'absence de l'influence occidentale qui ne se manifeste qu'au niveau de quelques détails (cf. Mouriki 1984, 208-213).

⁷⁹ Hadermann-Misguich 1985.

⁸⁰ Stylianou/Stylianou 1985, *passim*.



Pl. 19. *Saintes Femmes, Moutoullas, église de la Vierge, mur ouest, 1280, fresque*

ment réduit et l'on retrouve à peine trois ensembles⁸¹. Cette régression stupéfiante de la production de fresque sous la domination latine incite à la réflexion. Après l'implantation des Croisés sur l'île en 1191, les relations entre les Lusignans et l'église orthodoxe de Chypre s'étaient considérablement tendues. Le XIII^e siècle est connu pour être une période de troubles qui étaient pénibles à supporter pour les habitants autochtones de l'île. Des mesures restrictives vouant l'archevêque à l'humiliation et à la soumission ont obligé celui-ci à quitter les lieux⁸². Des moines ont été arrêtés, emprisonnés, puis torturés et brûlés en 1231. Après 1260 le pape dans sa *Constitutio Cypria* abolissait le siège d'archevêque grec en Chypre⁸³. L'Eglise chypriote devait désormais se soumettre à la volonté de Rome et cette situation devait perdurer jusqu'en 1571. Le rôle de l'Eglise, en tant que patron principal des commandes artistiques, devait, dans cet état de chose, être excessivement réduit ou même anéanti.

Dans son étude des fresques de Lysi (à Chypre) Annemarie Weyl Carr analyse la situation économique et culturelle dans l'île au XIII^e siècle et en déduit que la crise endurée par l'Eglise orthodoxe s'est répercutée sur l'art où l'on assiste à une régression sur les deux niveaux tant quantitatif que qualitatif. Sur les quelques cycles de peintures créés au XIII^e siècle (pas plus de trois), l'on remarque une

détérioration évidente au niveau du langage artistique. Les styles qui se caractérisent par les formes archaïsantes et schématiques s'apparentent plus à l'art syrien qu'à la tradition de Byzance⁸⁴. De plus la communauté syrienne en Chypre au XIII^e siècle formait une part importante de la population non seulement urbaine mais rurale aussi⁸⁵. Ces Syriens qui avaient embarqué sur l'île non seulement avec les Latins et bien longtemps avant eux⁸⁶, ont continué à jouir de beaucoup de privilèges qui leur étaient offerts par les Latins en Terres Saintes⁸⁷. Ils détenaient de grands postes dans l'administration, à l'encontre des autochtones qui étaient dépourvus de tels droits, comme ils fournissaient des combattants. Beaucoup d'entre eux étaient artisans ou commerçants. Dans certains endroits les Syriens formaient même la majorité de la population comme à Famagouste⁸⁸.

L'épanouissement à Chypre de l'élément syrien a, sans aucun doute, favorisé l'influence de l'art syrien dans l'île tout au long du XIII^e siècle⁸⁹. Ainsi notre analyse nous conduit à déduire que c'est l'art

⁸¹ Les ensembles de peintures murales se limitent aux fresques de la seconde couche de la Panagia Amasgou à Monagri, datées par Susan Boyd du début du XIII^e siècle (cf. Boyd 1974, 279-300) alors que Stylianou les attribue à la fin du XII^e siècle (Stylianou/Stylianou 1985, 241-243), celles de l'église de Saint Hérakléidos du monastère de Saint Jean Lampadistis à Kalopanayiotis qui remontent à la première moitié du siècle (Stylianou/Stylianou 1985, 173-190) et enfin le cycle de la Panagia à Moutoullas daté de 1280 (Mouriki 1984, 172-213; Stylianou/Stylianou 1985, 192-195).

⁸² Richard 1979, 162-163.

⁸³ Richard 1979, 163.

⁸⁴ Pour Mouriki l'archaïsme des fresques de Moutoullas les rapproche de l'art du XI^e siècle à Byzance et, plus précisément aux modèles de Hosios Lukas en Phocide (les années 1030-1040), alors que Weyl Carr et Morrocco donnent une opinion opposée à la première et relie ces fresques à la tradition syrienne et surtout au style de Behdidat, Weyl Carr/Morrocco 1991, 89; voir aussi Wharton 1988, 90.

⁸⁵ En milieu rural, les Syriens pratiquaient l'agriculture et plus particulièrement la culture de canne à sucre (Richard 1979, 166-167).

⁸⁶ Plus d'une inscription écrite sur les colophons de manuscrits anciens informe de l'existence au XII^e siècle d'une communauté syrienne, voir maronite, au sein de l'île de Chypre (cf. Assemani 1762, I, 307; Jabre-Mouawad 2001, 18; Mango 1976, 12-13, n. 10; Leroy 1965, 146, n. 2 et 235, n. 1).

⁸⁷ Makhairas 1932, I, 142-143 et II, 112.

⁸⁸ Richard 1979, 168.

⁸⁹ A propos de l'influence syrienne sur les fresques de Moutoullas voir: Immerzeel 2007.

à Chypre au XIII^e siècle qui a subit l'influence de la tradition syrienne et non le contraire comme on l'a toujours supposé. Certaines icônes qui ont été considérées comme production chypriote peuvent, de ce fait, provenir d'une main syrienne.

Les icônes qu'on a regroupées possèdent des points communs qui les rapprochent et les apparentent. Ces traits se manifestent généralement dans l'absence de profondeur et de volume des figures, dans la prédominance du traitement en aplat et le schématisme des détails, la simplicité de l'interprétation des draperies, le hiératisme, la frontalité et la raideur des poses, comme aussi dans les formes très caractéristiques des yeux, du nez, des oreilles et de la bouche. Toutes ces icônes qui ont été datées du milieu du XIII^e siècle et de sa deuxième moitié rappellent évidemment les fresques dans les églises du Liban et de la Syrie. Mais comme ces icônes se rattachent le plus à différents ensembles de peinture murales se localisant dans la région de Koura et sont d'origine melkite, Immerzeel considère, à juste titre, que cet atelier de peinture qui a été appelé par Jaroslav Folda «l'atelier des Saints Cavaliers», se situait dans le Koura. Ainsi l'on peut affirmer l'existence d'une nouvelle école de peinture qui vient s'ajouter à celles déjà bien connues de Jérusalem, Acre, Sinai ou Chypre. Cette école se localisant dans le Koura peut être appelée l'école syro-libanaise de peinture.

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Un linteau du Fayoum au British Museum

Adeline JEUDY, Jacques VAN DER VLIET

Le linteau publié ici est un témoin de la culture chrétienne du Fayoum vers l'an mil, époque où celle-ci prend son dernier essor avant le déclin du Moyen Âge. Grâce à la perspicacité de Sofia Schaten, cette pièce peut être rattachée à une petite série de monuments semblables, identifiée en premier par Gérard Roquet¹. Ces linteaux de bois, désormais au nombre de cinq, comportent tous un texte copte situé de part et d'autre du motif central: une croix sculptée. Les inscriptions suivent un même formulaire et comportent des dates qui les situent au X^e siècle. Dans l'étude présente, l'éditio princeps du texte, due à Jacques van der Vliet, est suivie d'une discussion à propos du décor figuré, par Adeline Jeudy².

LE TEXTE

Le linteau consiste en une poutre en bois, haute de 16,5 cm, longue de 192,5 cm, et profonde de 12 cm. Le verso a partiellement gardé les contours du fût de l'arbre qui a servi à la fabrication du linteau. Aux deux extrémités, la poutre a été façonnée afin d'être suspendue dans un support. La face est ornée de trois panneaux à décor figuré, séparés par deux panneaux inscrits de texte. A plusieurs endroits les traces d'une polychromie peinte subsistent. La pièce est complète et en assez bon état de conservation; seulement dans la moitié droite, l'inscription et le décor ont subi une certaine altération, dégradant notamment les l. 4-5 du texte.

L'inscription comporte sept lignes de texte en copte «fayoumi-sahidique», dont trois à gauche, quatre à droite du panneau central. A gauche, le texte est incisé, tandis que dans le panneau de droite, il est sculpté en relief. L'écriture est très soignée et consiste en une belle onciale ronde, plus lourde dans le texte de droite. La hauteur des lettres est de 2,5-3 cm, à gauche, et de 2,5 cm, à droite. Sur le panneau central, deux caractères symboliques, plus grands et fort stylisés, de part et d'autre de la croix,

s'inscrivent plutôt dans le symbolisme du décor.

La pièce a été achetée au commerçant cairote Panayotis Kyticas (v. Dawson et Uphill 1995, 233) en 1915 (n° d'accession 1915/4-10/75).

Inédit. Reproduit: Davies 1987, 27, Pl. 33; Enß 2005: Pl. 84, Fig. 137c (détail); cf. Schaten 1998, 306, n. 7.

British Museum, n° d'inv. EA 54040
Fayoum, A.D. 920/921

[panneau central]

Λ ω

[gauche]

✱ πβ(οι)ς ι(ησοϋ)ς πεχ(ριςτο)ς
φοιθ(ι) εκι-
ρι χανλ γι(ος) πμακαρι-
3. ος ιωκιμ μην τεφσιμι

[droite]

μ[ην νεφωηρι] ξε νταρ
αρωα[π πι]η[ι] α[ρ]κατρ ζεν
6. νηφριςι μμιν μμαρ ζαμη-
ν εσεωπι διοκ(λητιανοϋ) χλζ

1. πβς: le compendium πβς est doublé d'une ligne d'abréviation; ις; πχς; φοι'θ'.
2. γι/, ligature de type cursif.
3. μην: écrit en ligature.
6. μμαρ: μμ- en ligature; ζαμη-: -μη- en ligature.
7. διοκ.

¹ Voir Roquet 1978; Schaten 1998, 306, n. 7.

² Les auteurs tiennent à remercier les conservateurs du Département des Antiquités Égyptiennes du British Museum, en particulier MM. M. Marée et J. Taylor, pour leur aide précieuse.



Pl. 1. Linteau British Museum EA 54040: vue d'ensemble (© British Museum)



Pl. 2. Linteau British Museum EA 54040: texte, panneau de gauche (© British Museum)



Pl. 3. Linteau British Museum EA 54040: texte, panneau de droite (© British Museum)

Alpha-Omega.

+ O Seigneur Jésus-Christ, secours (βοηθέω) Monsieur (κύριος) Chaël, fils (υἱός) du bienheureux (μακάριος) Iôkim, ainsi que sa femme et [ses enfants],

car lui, il a [acheté cette maison] et l'a construite de ses propres efforts. Amen, ainsi soit-il.

(L'année depuis) Dioclétien 637 (= 920-921 après Jésus-Christ).

³ Ces linteaux du Fayoum seront cités ici d'après les numéros de Roquet 1978, 339-342 (le texte des n^{os} 1-2 est repris dans *SBKopt.* I, n^{os} 400-401). A propos des linteaux inscrits de l'Égypte chrétienne, on peut encore signaler, outre les publications citées de Roquet et de Schaten: Hammerstaedt 1999, 187-199; Krause 1988; Rutschowskaya 1986, 150-153; Wietheger 1992, 100-102.

⁴ De nombreux exemples dans le corpus de Van Lantschoot 1929.

⁵ Au Fayoum, par exemple, dans une église disparue de Tebtynis (X^e s., Walters 1989, 205) ou dans l'église du monastère de Naqloun (XI^e s., v. J. van der Vliet, «The inscriptions», dans Godlewski, à paraître).

Comme c'est le cas des autres linteaux qui appartiennent à la même série, l'inscription est une dédicace³. Il s'agit d'une prière qui requiert le secours divin pour un nommé Chaël (forme brève de Michaël, Michel) et pour sa famille, à l'occasion de la construction d'un édifice. La forme caractéristique du texte le rattache au genre des prières conventionnelles en faveur des bienfaiteurs des monastères et des églises. On en trouve de très semblables dans les colophons des manuscrits⁴ ou en bordure des peintures murales⁵. Dans l'acclamation du début, l'emploi du verbe βοηθέω (l. 1),

presque de rigueur dans ce contexte, fait ressortir le caractère apotropaïque de la prière, ce qui cadre bien avec la nature générale du décor figuré du linteau⁶.

L'acte de fondation lui-même est évoqué par deux phrases parallèles, très brèves, autour des verbes **ϣωπ**, «acheter», et **κωτ**, «construire» (l. 5). Malgré les dégâts qu'a subis l'inscription à cet endroit, la reconstitution en est assurée grâce au texte analogue des linteaux Roquet n^{os} 1 et 2, où l'édifice en question est identifié comme une maison («cette maison», **πιη<ι>**, dans le n^o 2; «ces maisons», **νιηι**, dans le n^o 1). Dans la seule inscription Roquet n^o 4, il s'agit d'une «demeure», **πιμανϣω(πε)**⁷. En effet, l'espace dans la lacune de la l. 5 et les vestiges qui subsistent imposent la lecture **πιηι**, «cette maison». Le verbe qui précède (**ϣα[π]**) se trouve également, en partie, dans la lacune, mais la lecture adoptée n'est pas non plus douteuse. Il est vrai que nulle part ailleurs dans le corpus connu des inscriptions monumentales en copte l'achat d'un édifice avant sa (re-)construction n'est évoqué. Dans le linteau Roquet n^o 3, publié jadis par G. Lefebvre, qui comporte la même formule double avec, en deuxième lieu, **αγκατϣ**, «(et) il l'a construit(-e)», la phrase correspondante tombe dans une lacune⁸. Par contre, les colophons de livres font assez souvent mention de l'achat du manuscrit préalablement à sa donation⁹. Ici encore le texte du linteau se rapproche des prières de colophon, rapprochement qui suggère que la maison en question ait été une fondation pieuse, plutôt qu'un domicile privé¹⁰. Le mot «demeure», **μανϣωπε**, qui tient la place de «maison» dans le linteau Roquet n^o 4, rappelle l'usage monastique de ce vocable, qui figure également sur les linteaux de Baouit¹¹. Comme la plupart des linteaux inscrits qui proviennent de l'Égypte chrétienne, celui de Londres a, selon toute vraisemblance, surmonté la porte d'entrée d'une «maison» faisant partie d'un complexe monastique.

Cette «maison», Chaël l'a achetée, puis construite «de ses propres efforts» (l. 5-6), ce qui veut dire «de ses propres moyens», comme le montre de façon plus explicite la phrase analogue du linteau Roquet n^o 1¹². Le titre de Chaël, **κύριος**, «seigneur, monsieur» (l. 1-2), tout comme le riche décor du monument, est suggestif de son appartenance à l'élite sociale. Le dédicateur du linteau Roquet n^o 3 porte le même titre¹³, tandis que celui du n^o 4 est un diacre, tout comme son père, un autre Chaël¹⁴. Le père

de notre Chaël, Iôkim, ne porte aucun titre, sauf l'épithète «bienheureux» qui montre qu'il est décédé (l. 2-3). Son nom, peu commun, représente une variante de Joachim. Comme dans les autres linteaux du groupe, la prière du texte ne concerne pas l'unique personne du dédicateur: la filiation et l'inclusion formelle d'une femme et d'enfants (ici, l. 3-4) font preuve d'un sens de la famille assez développé¹⁵. De toute évidence, les milieux aisés du Fayoum au X^e siècle étaient fiers de proclamer leur munificence et de perpétuer ainsi leur mémoire.

La cohérence de ce groupe de linteaux et leur provenance d'une même région d'Égypte, le Fayoum, ne sont pas seulement assurées par leur formulaire quasi-identique, mais encore par leur langue. Celle-ci représente ce que l'on pourrait appeler du «fayoumi-sahidique», une forme de sahidique tardif qui trahit dans un degré variable le milieu fayoumique, surtout dans le vocalisme¹⁶. C'est là l'idiome couramment employé dans les textes coptes non-littéraires du Fayoum au X^e-XII^e siècle, peu

⁶ Trois autres linteaux du groupe comportent également une acclamation avec **βοηθέω** (Roquet n^{os} 1-3). Pour l'histoire de cette acclamation, v. l'étude classique de Peterson 1926; pour son rôle dans l'épigraphie copte médiévale, Van der Vliet 2006, 36-37.

⁷ Van der Vliet 2002-2003, 145.

⁸ Lefebvre 1910, 60, l. 4-6. La publication, qui ne fournit ni photo ni facsimilé, ne permet pas de reconstitution. En tous cas, la ligne perdue était beaucoup plus longue que la phrase correspondante du linteau de Londres.

⁹ Pour quelques exemples pertinents, tous avec **ϣωπ**, «acheter», v. Van Lantschoot 1929, n^o LXXX, verso, l. 72-76; n^o CII, verso, l. 3-6 et l. 16-18.

¹⁰ Comme le suppose Krause 1991, 1292; il ne s'agit pas non plus d'un tombeau, v. Schaten 1998, 306-307.

¹¹ Voir Krause 1988, 113; pour le sens de «monk's cell, or group of cells», v. Crum 1939, 580a-b.

¹² C'est ainsi qu'il faut interpréter la phrase **ζε πετηβ** (plus correctement: **ζε πετενητ**; en sahidique propre: **ζε πετηντατ**, comme dans le colophon Van Lantschoot 1929, n^o CII, verso, l. 16-18); il ne s'agit donc nullement d'un toponyme **πετηβ** (ainsi Roquet 1978, 340, suivi par Timm 1984-1992, t. IV, 1907, et *SBKopt.* I, n^o 400).

¹³ Lefebvre 1910, 60, l. 1: **κυρω**; pour les variations dans l'orthographe, v. Förster 2002, 453-54.

¹⁴ Cf. Van der Vliet 2002-2003, 143-146.

¹⁵ La famille ne manque que dans le linteau Roquet n^o 2. On la retrouve ailleurs, par exemple dans *SBKopt.* I, n^o 302 (dédicace d'un atelier à l'église de Notre Dame à Philae, VIII^e s.).

¹⁶ Correspondant le plus souvent au *Sf* de Crum 1939. Pour une discussion des idiomes coptes du Fayoum, v. R. Kasser, dans Diebner / Kasser 1989, 70-108 («Diversité dialectale copte en Moyenne-Égypte et au Fayoum»).

de temps avant l'arabisation définitive de la région au cours du XI^e-XII^e siècle¹⁷. Il vaut la peine de souligner que, en plus des linteaux, le fayoumi-sahidique servit, autour de l'an mil, à rédiger des inscriptions monumentales dans les contextes les plus variés: dans le décor des églises (à Naqloun, par exemple), sur des stèles funéraires et des vêtements d'apparat, sans compter les nombreux documents administratifs¹⁸. En dépit de son orthographe flottant et de son bannissement quasi-total du domaine strictement littéraire, il semble donc qu'il ait acquis, parmi les chrétiens du Fayoum, une position presque officielle de langue utilisée dans le domaine «public».

Le texte du linteau de Londres représente un nouveau témoin de cet idiome. On en notera les particularités principales, connues du groupe entier des linteaux: le /a/ pour /o/ en syllabes fermées (par exemple dans **ΝΤΑϚ**, l. 4, et **-ΚΑΤϚ**, l. 5), le /i/ pour /e/ en auslaut (par exemple **ϚΙϚΙ**, l. 6), l'incertitude sur **Β** et **Ϛ** (**ϚΟΙΘΙ**, l. 1) et sur **Ο** et **Ω** (**-ϚΟΠΙ**, l. 7), ainsi que des orthographes comme **ΜΗΝ** (l. 3, pour **ΜΝ** ou **ΜΕΝ**), **ΝΗϚ-** (l. 6, pour **ΝΕϚ-**) et **ϚΙΜΙ** (l. 3)¹⁹. Une autre caractéristique de l'idiome, l'extrême instabilité de l'orthographe, même à l'intérieur d'un seul texte assez bref, est illustrée ici par les variantes **ΤΕϚ-** (l. 3) et **ΝΗϚ-** (l. 6)²⁰. Par contre, le lambdacisme qui marque le

fayoumique propre est absent et ne se trouve, dans ce petit corpus, que dans le linteau Roquet n° 1 (**ΩΗΛΙ**, sah. **ΩΗΡΕ**).

Si une provenance du Fayoum semble certaine, il se peut que l'origine du linteau de Londres puisse être déterminée avec plus d'exactitude. Parmi les cinq linteaux qui constituent le corpus, il y en a un dont la provenance est à la fois précise et certaine²¹. Le linteau Roquet n° 3 a été trouvé au début du XX^e siècle à Abou Hamed²². Ce nom, actuellement moins usité, désigne l'un des hameaux qui ont intégré le village moderne de Qasr al-Bâsil, situé à peu de distance à l'est de Tebtynis, sur le Bahr al-Gharaq, dans la partie sud-est du Fayoum²³. Un indice supplémentaire est fourni par une petite série de stèles funéraires en bois, également datées du X^e siècle, qui sous plusieurs rapports sont très proches du groupe des linteaux et qui doivent être originaires des environs de Tebtynis-Toutôn, donc de la même région²⁴. Ces indices, pour maigres qu'ils soient, plaident donc en faveur d'une provenance dans le bassin du Bahr al-Gharaq, province méridionale du Fayoum, qui comptait à l'époque plusieurs centres chrétiens prospères, parmi lesquels la ville de Tebtynis-Toutôn et le monastère de Naqloun.

LE DÉCOR

Notre linteau est composé de cinq panneaux horizontaux qui alternent figuration et inscriptions gravées ou sculptées. Le panneau central est encadré de deux panneaux contenant les inscriptions, puis de deux autres comportant des motifs figurés. Chaque élément est inscrit dans un médaillon. Un fond floral composé de rosettes et de petites feuilles est figuré de façon continue de part et d'autre du linteau. Sur le panneau central, une croix grecque est flanquée de l'Alpha et de l'Omega. Les deux panneaux situés aux extrémités du linteau comportent chacun deux médaillons contenant des griffons, une tête de poisson et une rosette inscrite dans une étoile. Les deux griffons sont symétriquement affrontés d'une extrémité à l'autre du linteau. Le fond ornemental représenté dans les médaillons comprenant l'Alpha et l'Omega, est composé de grappes de raisin, de feuilles trilobées et de petites rosettes. Une palmette décore l'Omega: elle est insérée dans la composition de sorte que le centre de l'Omega forme la tige de la palmette.

Comme il l'a été souligné lors de l'étude du texte, ce linteau s'inscrit dans un ensemble plus large

¹⁷ Noter que pour les textes littéraires (bibliques, patristiques, hagiographiques) transmis dans les codices, le fayoumique propre avait été supplanté par le sahidique; v. Boud'hors 2005, 22-24. Pour les étapes de l'arabisation au Fayoum, v. Gaubert/Mouton 2004; Van der Vliet 2005b.

¹⁸ Voir Van der Vliet 2005a, pour une discussion de ces différentes classes de monuments.

¹⁹ Les linteaux Roquet n°s 1 et 4 ont également **ϚΙΜΙ**, tandis que le seul linteau Roquet n° 3 comporte l'orthographe sahidique **ϚϚΙΜΕ**. On notera encore l'emploi du compendium **ΠΟϚ** (l. 1), v. Roquet 1978, 341.

²⁰ La même incertitude dans les inscriptions de l'église de Naqloun (XI^e s.), v. J. van der Vliet, «The inscriptions», dans Godlewski, à paraître, n° W.4.

²¹ On notera que le prétendu toponyme **ΠΕΤΗΒ**, lu par Roquet (1978, 30) dans son linteau n° 1, est un fantôme (v. ci-dessus, n. 12).

²² Lefebvre 1910, 59, ajoute qu'il fut transporté au Musée du Caire en décembre 1908. Selon Roquet, ce linteau serait de pierre, mais l'édition de Lefebvre ne fournit aucune précision à ce propos.

²³ Voir les discussions dans Van der Vliet 2002-2003, 146; 2005a, 82-83.

²⁴ Réunies par Boud'hors / Calament 2004 (v. leur «annexe», p. 466-468), qui soulignent la parenté entre les deux groupes de monuments.

de linteaux commémoratifs provenant du Fayoum, datés du X^e siècle et initialement publiés par Gérard Roquet²⁵. De manière générale, le décor des linteaux possède une valeur apotropaïque dès lors qu'ils sont placés à l'entrée d'un bâtiment (église ou maison)²⁶. Cette caractéristique du décor est notamment complémentaire du texte inscrit sur notre linteau, une prière appelant à la protection d'un donateur et de sa famille. Lorsque la croix «victorieuse» est inscrite sur un médaillon, un linteau, un tympan ou une pierre tombale, il lui est attribué un rôle de barrière contre le démon²⁷. C'est ce rôle qui a été souligné lors d'une étude des linteaux syriens qui ornent l'entrée des maisons²⁸. L'Alpha et l'Omega sont complémentaires de la croix en tant que motif protecteur²⁹. Dans la même catégorie de motifs, on retrouve également les saints cavaliers, qui ne sont pas représentés sur notre linteau mais qui sont figurés sur d'autres frises, dès le VI^e siècle. Le linteau BM 1276, provenant de Moyenne Égypte et publié de nouveau par Sofia Schaten, présente par exemple deux cavaliers affrontés³⁰.

Les autres motifs représentés sur notre linteau sont deux griffons, un poisson et une rosette. Chacun est inscrit dans un médaillon. L'association d'un griffon et d'un poisson n'est pas courante. On retrouve pourtant de nombreux poissons représentés (en entier) dans des frises à thème nilotique, et dont il ne semble pas utile de rappeler l'évidente symbolique chrétienne mêlée de tradition égyptienne. Sur le linteau du British Museum, on a sculpté avec minutie les écailles et la nageoire du poisson. Il est inscrit dans une étoile à huit branches formée par la superposition de deux carrés imbriqués, et seule sa tête a été représentée, tournée en direction du griffon, à gauche. La direction vers laquelle le poisson est tourné, et le fait que seule sa tête soit représentée, sont des détails singuliers. Cependant, l'absence de parallèle ne permet pas, pour l'instant, d'attribuer une quelconque signification au choix d'avoir représenté ainsi le poisson. Le motif qui lui est symétrique, une rosette, appartient plutôt à un répertoire purement décoratif. Mais l'étoile à huit branches qui la contient semble importante dans la mesure où elle est symétrique à l'étoile dans laquelle le poisson est inscrit. Ce type d'étoile est une solution de mise en forme de motifs très courante sur les frises islamiques, que l'on remarque par exemple sur les frises en bois du Palais Occidental du Caire ou des fragments provenant de Fustat, conservés au Musée Islamique³¹. Un frag-

ment présente notamment un griffon dans une étoile à huit branches³². Il semble que l'étoile soit également employée pour sa valeur apotropaïque, dans l'art copte comme dans l'art islamique³³. Une amulette copte du Fayoum comporte justement «à gauche, trois pentagrammes; à droite, deux étoiles (ou roues) à huit points se terminant en cercles», une description qui rappelle le motif figuré sur notre linteau³⁴.

Le griffon est quant à lui peu commun dans l'iconographie copte. On le retrouve sur deux autres frises de provenance inconnue, conservées à New York, qui semblent contemporaines à notre linteau³⁵. Deux griffons sont également figurés parmi le décor d'inspiration islamique de l'écran de sanctuaire de l'Eglise de Sitt Barbara (Vieux-Caire), daté du XI^e siècle³⁶. Le griffon, tout comme le sphinx ou la harpie, appartient à une même tradition d'animaux fabuleux à caractère protecteur ou à signification astrologique, qui sont intégrés au bestiaire de l'art islamique³⁷. Les prototypes connus de ces motifs sont à rechercher dans l'art iranien pré-islamique, dont les Musulmans se sont inspirés et dont ils ont vraisemblablement conservé la même signification³⁸. Parmi ces significations, le griffon – tout comme le sphinx – peut être interprété comme gardien du sanctuaire³⁹. Il faut également rappeler que le griffon protecteur est déjà présent dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine. Animaux fabuleux

²⁵ Roquet 1978.

²⁶ Roquet 1978, 344; Van der Vliet 2002-2003, 143.

²⁷ Thierry 1999, 235; Grabar 1970, 25.

²⁸ Engemann 1975.

²⁹ Horsley 1981, 67; Schiemenz 1986, 35; Wietheger 1992, 201-202.

³⁰ Schaten 1998, 307-310; cf. Hall 1905, 132, pl. 91. Il s'agit de saint Pakene et saint Victor, identifiés grâce à des inscriptions.

³¹ Pauty 1930, pl. XXXIV, n° 4790 et pl. XXXVI, n° 6342. Le Palais Occidental fut construit à la fin du X^e siècle par le calife Al-'Aziz pour sa fille Sitt al-Mulk. Al-Mustansir le termine en 1058. Puis le sultan mamelouk Qalawun le rachète en 1283 et construit son hôpital par-dessus le palais en ruines. Voir Fu'ad Sayyid 1998, 300.

³² *Trésors Fatimides* 91, n° 7.

³³ Winkler 1930, 119-127.

³⁴ Crum 1922, 543, cité chez Winkler 1930, 125, n. 5.

³⁵ Enß 2005, Pl. 84.

³⁶ Pauty 1930, Pl. IX.

³⁷ Baer 1965, 54.

³⁸ Baer 1965, 82.

³⁹ Ils peuvent également être considérés comme les gardiens de «l'arbre de vie». Baer 1965, 56-57; Khazai 1978.

consacrés à Apollon, les griffons, opposés aux Arimanes, gardent le trésor du dieu dans les terres des Hyperboréens. Ce motif protecteur est repris dans l'art funéraire, où le griffon se présente comme gardien des tombeaux⁴⁰. Sur un sarcophage d'enfant au Musée du Latran, deux griffons sont notamment représentés sur les côtés de la cuve⁴¹. Cependant, les stèles funéraires coptes de l'antiquité tardive ne reprennent pas ce motif: elles figurent plutôt des aigles, des paons ou des lions⁴².

Le griffon sur notre linteau est caractérisé par son aile pointue et droit levée, ainsi qu'une tête pourvue d'oreilles dressées. Le griffon dans l'art islamique n'est pas strictement composé d'un corps de lion et d'une tête d'aigle, mais il connaît plusieurs variantes, dont le griffon de notre linteau procure un exemple, puisque son corps de lion est ici associé à une tête d'animal: il s'apparente ainsi à un quadrupède ailé⁴³. Il rappelle les griffons qui décorent la façade du palais de Mschatta en Jordanie (ca. 743), qui s'abreuvent par paires affrontées à des vases dont jaillit une vigne. Deux autres frises d'origine copte, mentionnées dans le paragraphe précédent, sont décorées de griffons similaires à celui de notre linteau: la frise 28.12 conservée au Metropolitan Museum de New York et la frise 86.80 conservée au Newark Museum⁴⁴. Publiées par Elisabeth Enß, ces deux frises présentent, pour la première, trois médaillons contenant une croix centrale flanquée de deux griffons, et pour la deuxième, trois médaillons (il manque vraisemblablement un quatrième) contenant un griffon et deux quadrupèdes non ailés. L'ensemble de ces motifs sont complétés d'éléments ornementaux, dont des feuilles de palme, mais aucune inscription ne semble avoir jamais été sculptée. Ces deux frises sont de provenance inconnue,

mais l'auteur fait remarquer que la similitude de leur style indique qu'elles proviendraient d'un même atelier. Enß les compare, pour leur style, à notre linteau du British Museum, mais elle ne s'explique ni la signification du motif du griffon (qu'elle nomme «quadrupède ailé»), ni la fonction de la frise, qu'elle suppose architecturale. L'hypothèse que les frises de New York et Newark proviennent également du Fayoum semble envisageable.

Des griffons sont d'autre part figurés sur un petit nombre de tissus conservés au Louvre, contemporains à notre linteau et provenant du Fayoum, d'Antinoé, de Baouit, d'al-Bercha, de Fustat⁴⁵. Sur ces fragments de tissus, le griffon, que Pierre du Bourguet apparentait à un «cheval ailé» de tradition sassanide, est inscrit dans un médaillon, parfois entouré de putti et, dans un cas, de danseurs. Les représentations de griffons sont plus ou moins stylisées, mais l'on reconnaît bien, sur ces tissus, le modèle de griffon si populaire dans l'art islamique, sur la céramique, les tissus ou les frises de bois. Un autre fragment de tissu découvert au Monastère de l'Archange Gabriel (Naqloun) dans le Fayoum au cours des fouilles du cimetière A en 2002, présente des griffons stylisés, à l'aile courbe et élancée, inscrits dans des médaillons alternant oiseaux et griffons⁴⁶. La majorité des fragments de tissus conservés appartenaient à des tuniques funéraires ou des linceuls, dont le décor est bien souvent complété d'inscriptions en arabe⁴⁷. Dans le Fayoum, région réputée pour ses ateliers de tissage, un atelier est notamment soumis au contrôle califal: le tirâz privé situé à Tutûn (ou Toutûn, l'antique Tebtynis), mentionné sur des inscriptions complétant le décor de châles fayoumiques du IX^e-X^e siècle⁴⁸. La présence de modèles islamiques est ainsi bien attestée dans l'oasis, dès les deux premiers siècles suivant la conquête. Il est donc possible que le griffon représenté sur notre linteau du Fayoum fut inspiré du décor des tissus réalisés dans les ateliers locaux, tissus auxquels le sculpteur et le commanditaire du linteau devaient être familiers. Et comme il l'a été évoqué précédemment lors de l'étude du texte, notre linteau pourrait justement provenir d'un village de la région de Tebtynis. La présence du griffon sur plusieurs linteaux provenant probablement du Fayoum témoignerait donc de la bonne circulation des modèles iconographiques appliqués à différents types de support – le bois, le tissu. Nous avons vu précédemment que le griffon peut revêtir un caractère protecteur. Le choix du griffon pour compléter l'iconographie d'un linteau n'est

⁴⁰ Cumont 1942, 170.

⁴¹ Benndorf / Schöne 1867, n° 438.

⁴² Crum 1902, Pl. XLIV-XLI et Pl. XLVII-XLVIII.

⁴³ Gelfer-Jørgensen 1986, 122-123 et Pl. 37b.

⁴⁴ Enß 2005, 66.

⁴⁵ Du Bourguet 1964, nos H16, H19, H20, H24, H25, H45, H46, H47, H65. L'auteur date l'ensemble de ces tissus du X^e siècle.

⁴⁶ Godlewski 2003, 167, Fig. 3a. L'alternance de griffons avec d'autres motifs est un motif courant: de nombreuses céramiques et tissus islamiques présentent des sphinxes chassés par des griffons, et vice versa, voir Baer 1965, 25.

⁴⁷ Czaja-Szewczak 2003, 184, fig. 9.

⁴⁸ M. Durand, dans Bosson/Aufrère 1999, 259-261; Durand/Rettig 2002.

donc pas anodin. C'est la valeur protectrice de ce motif qui est mise en valeur, faisant ainsi perdurer la tradition antique.

Enfin, l'Omega sur notre linteau est complété d'une palmette dont le style rappelle les stucs de Samarra et, plus proche géographiquement, ceux de la Mosquée d'Ibn Tulun au Caire. La palmette du linteau évoque un motif similaire représenté sur les panneaux supérieurs des portes du sanctuaire de l'Eglise d'al-Adra au Deir al-Surian (Wadi Natrun)⁴⁹. Chacun de ces panneaux contient un saint personnage encadré de deux palmettes. Le style des palmettes sur les portes du Deir al-Surian est également réminiscent des stucs de Samarra et Ibn Tulun. Et l'intérieur du sanctuaire de l'église est précisément décoré de stucs similaires⁵⁰. Sur les portes de Deir al-Surian, M. Frazer interprète ce motif comme une version stylisée d'un arbre rappelant le Paradis⁵¹. Peut-être pourrait-on suggérer, non sans précaution, une interprétation analogue à propos de la palmette figurée sur le linteau du British Museum.

En conclusion, si le décor et le texte de notre linteau comportent tous les éléments caractéristiques qui lui confèrent une valeur apotropaïque, son décor est également le témoin de la transformation progressive du répertoire iconographique copte vers un répertoire copte-arabe, principalement de par l'inclusion du griffon de style islamique. La valeur protectrice du griffon est à replacer, quant à elle, dans la continuité d'une longue tradition datant de l'Antiquité.

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The Virgin Mary and the Midwife Salomé: The so-called Nativity scene in Chapel LI in the Monastery of Apa Apollo in Bawit

Gertrud J.M. VAN LOON

INTRODUCTION¹

In the winter of 1903-1904, the French archaeologist Jean Clédat, working at the site of the Monastery of Apa Apollo in Bawit (Middle Egypt), excavated a building he numbered 'Chapel LI' (Fig. 1)². Chapel LI was a freestanding rectangular room, built in mudbrick. Part of the painted decoration in this room had already disappeared by the time of the excavation but among the remaining paintings a cycle of scenes from the Life of the Virgin Mary or the Infancy of Christ had been preserved on the north wall: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Journey to Bethlehem and, as Clédat chose to designate it, the Nativity (Pls 4-8).

The last scene, the Nativity, is a most unusual depiction of this event: there is no Child. The only persons depicted are the Virgin lying on a bed, and to the right, the midwife Salomé who approaches Mary with outstretched hands. According to Clédat, both women were identified by inscriptions. On the photograph, only part of the inscription of Salomé is still visible: Salomé the midwife³. Both women have haloes: the Virgin is wearing a round nimbus while that of her companion is square.

In this contribution, this so-called Nativity scene will be explored. The scene is undoubtedly part of a cycle of paintings and on this particular wall it is the last scene of the series. Without the Child, it is rather difficult to call this scene a Nativity⁴. But if not a Nativity, what exactly has been depicted? Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya argued that: '...the painter wanted to make an emphatic pictorial statement about the doctrines of Mary's virginity and the birth of God. So these two figures were detached from the Nativity, possibly to empty the scene of any narrative character and to lay pictorial emphasis on the foundation of this incident in doctrine.'⁵

These ideas will be examined in some detail and then some additional questions will be investigated.

Who was Salomé? What role did she play in the life of the Virgin or the life of Christ? Why does she

¹ A preliminary version of this article was read as a paper at the Index of Christian Art colloquium *Interactions. Artistic Interchange between the Eastern and Western Worlds in the Medieval Period*, Princeton University, April 8-9, 2005. Discussions with colleagues and students at Princeton and, later that year, in Warsaw (Polish Academy of Sciences, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University and Warsaw University), have contributed to a fuller picture. For bibliographical references, I would like to thank especially Gonnie van den Berg-Onstwedder, Elizabeth Bolman, Ludovico Geymonat and Jacques van der Vliet. Dobrochna Zielińska provided information on the Nubian Nativity compositions and gave permission to publish her drawing of Wadi es-Sebu'a. An enigmatic remark of Jean Doresse was put into context by Hans-Georg Severin. Publication permission for the photographs of Chapel LI was graciously granted by the Centre Gabriel Millet (Paris, École pratique des hautes études) and Michiel Bootsman, photographer (Art Historical Institute, University of Amsterdam) did a wonderful job in making them more legible. The Musée du Louvre, Département des antiquités égyptiennes, section copte, and the F.J. Dölger-Institut (Bonn) are also warmly thanked for publication permission. The English was corrected by Rosemary Robson-McKillop.

² Clédat 1904, 523-526 and Clédat 1999, 109-132. For the (history of the) excavations in Bawit see Bénazeth 1995; 1997; 2002, 12-15; 2004; Bénazeth 2005; Boutros/Rutschowskaya 2005; Clackson 2000, 7; Coquin/Martin/Severin/du Bourguet 1991; Rutschowskaya 2004 (all with extensive bibliography). For general introductions on Bawit see also Clédat 1910 and Krause/Wessel 1966. Especially for documentary material: Timm 1984, 643-653. The most recent news on the ongoing excavations in Bawit (a joint project of the Louvre and the Institut français d'archéologie orientale in Cairo) and bibliography can be found on www.louvre.fr/media/repository/ressources/sources/pdf/src_document_51210_v2_m56577569830669676.pdf: *Nouvelles fouilles sur le site copte de Baouit*.

³ Η ΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ/// and ΣΑΛΟΜΕ ΤΜΕCΙΟ (Clédat 1999, 113).

⁴ Underlined, among other commentators, by Grabar 1946, 241; Wellen 1960, 54; Del Francia 1979, 223; Rutschowskaya (Catalogue Athens 2000), 274-275.

⁵ Rutschowskaya, Catalogue Athens 2000, 275. Grabar and Del Francia (see previous note) also proposed "virginity" as underlying theme of the scene.

En chiffres romains :
chapelles fouillées
par Jean Clédât

En chiffres arabes :
chapelles fouillées
par Jean Maspero

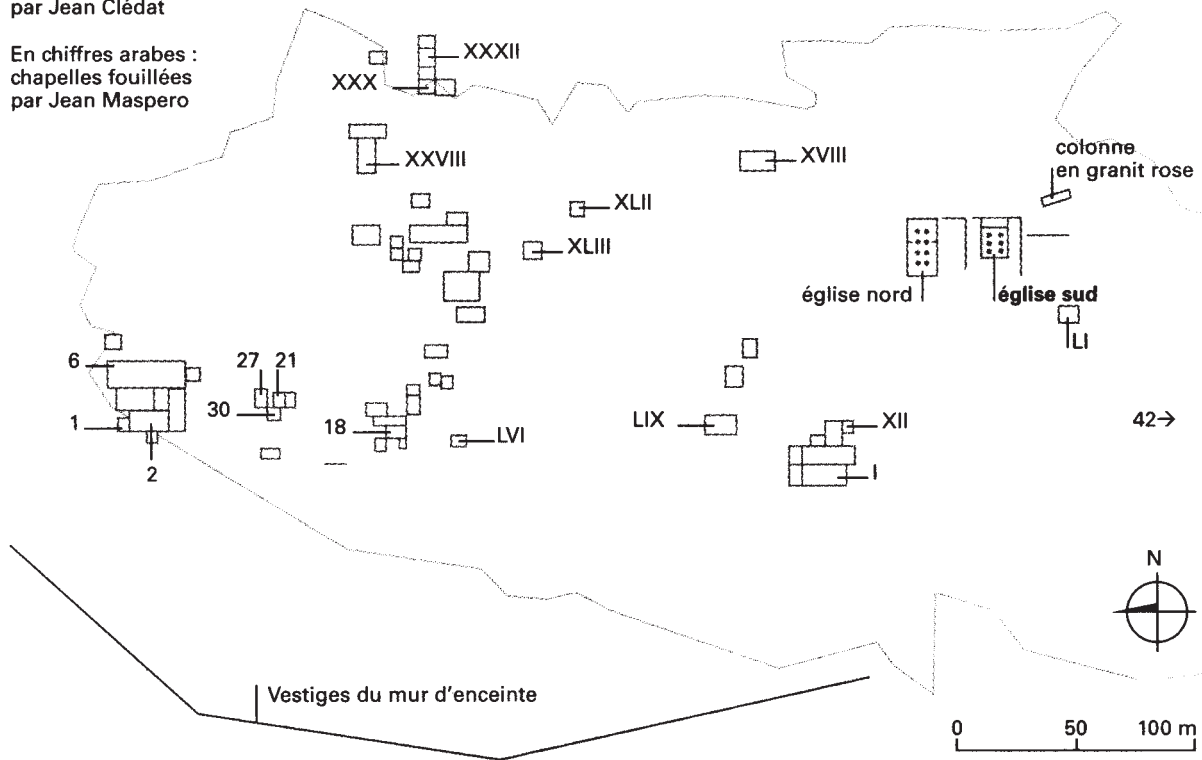


Fig. 1. Schematic plan of the northern and central part of Bawit (after Bénazeth 2002, Fig. 7)

have a square halo, a feature seldom seen in narrative scenes?

The following section is a description of the building and the painted decorations. Iconographical and iconological questions in conjunction with concluding remarks will be discussed below. Research

on the paintings and the building is a study in progress and this paper represents a status quo of my investigations.

CHAPEL LI

In 1904, Clédât published a brief description of Chapel LI, illustrated by a photograph. Twenty-four photographs of the wall paintings and inscriptions in this building illustrate his full notes published in 1999⁶. On the basis of Clédât's description and documentation, the picture emerges of a freestanding rectangular room, built in mud brick and covered with a barrel vault, located to the south-west of the South Church, in the central part of the monastic complex (Fig. 1). He probably did not measure the room; whatever the case he did not note the dimensions, or the distance to the church⁷.

In the middle of the east wall was an apsidal niche, flanked by moulded half-columns. In the centre of the south wall were two small windows

⁶ Clédât 1904, 523-526; Clédât 1999, 109-132. Clédât's extensive use of photography at an archaeological site was a novelty at that time. On Clédât as photographer, Mme. É. Gaillard (Paris, Louvre) will publish a contribution in the forthcoming Acts of the *Douzième journée d'études coptes* (Association francophone de coptologie), Lyon 18-22 mai 2005.

⁷ On Clédât's plan of the area, the South Church is located immediately to the south of the North Church (Clédât 1999, plan III; Bénazeth 2002, Figs 2, 34-35). However, a topographical survey of the area in 2003 yielded only the remains of the North Church. Bénazeth supposes that, judging from the quantity of blocks transported to Cairo and Paris, the South Church was razed to the ground (Bénazeth 2004, 17). The exact location of Chapel LI is still unknown.

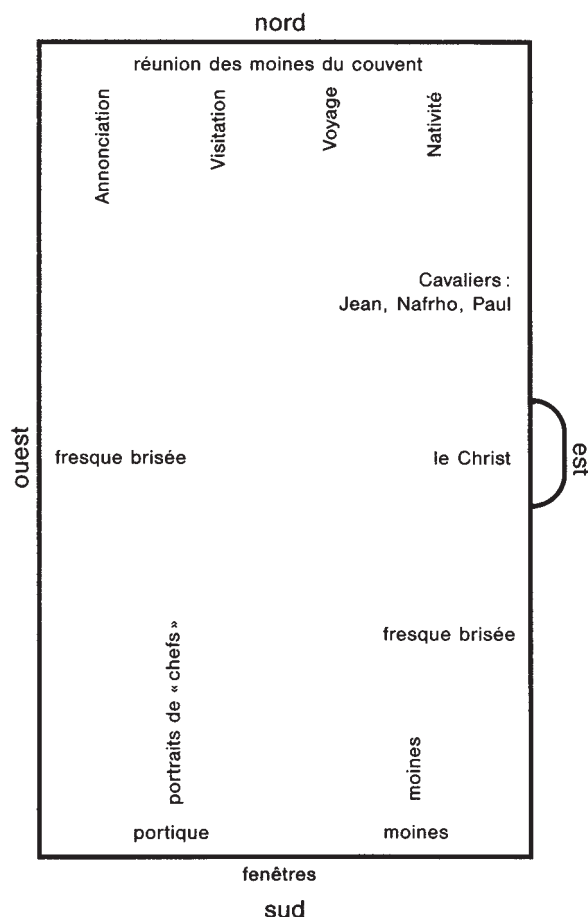


Fig. 2. Schematic plan of Chapel LI
(after Clédat 1999, Fig. 21)

and a doorway⁸. The west wall had been denuded of all decoration but paintings could still be seen on the south, east and north wall (Fig. 2). Unfortunately, there is only one photograph showing a complete wall space. The others show only details, sometimes difficult to locate and it is not easy to imagine how large this room was or how it once looked.

The paintings were found on the upper part of the walls and the lower part of the vault. The north, south and east walls were not completely flat: the spaces carrying the decorative borders and painted friezes recessed gradually, as is visible in Pls 2; 5. Moreover, it is only possible to guess how high the walls were and at what level the decoration started. It was the last building to be excavated during that season and it seems that Clédat did not have time to clear it right down to floor level: he did not record any furnishings or other finds in the room.

The upper part of the apsidal niche in the east wall was decorated with a Christ enthroned, surrounded by the four living creatures, and flanked by standing persons. The photograph shows the upper part of the niche, the lower part was still covered by sand (Pl. 1). Clédat stated that the latter part carried no decoration. On the wall, on both sides of the apsidal niche, a frieze of equestrian and standing saints, facing towards the niche was painted, with a decorative border above and below the images. To the south of the niche only a few fragments remained. In contrast, the northern part was fairly well preserved. The inscription accompanying the saints reads 'Jesus Christ! Remember John and Nafrho and Paul, his sons' (Pl. 2)⁹.

In the upper part of the south wall, on both sides of the windows and in the tympanum above, standing saints and busts of saints were painted (Pl. 3)¹⁰. The tympanum on the north wall was decorated with a portrait of the founding father Apollo and his friends Anoup and Phib, seated on a bench (a theme found in several rooms in Bawit¹¹). On the far left and right standing saints and monks filled up the corners. Inscriptions identified all persons (Pl. 4).

Below this tympanum, a cycle of four scenes was painted: from left to right, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Journey to Bethlehem (first identified by Clédat as 'the Departure of the Virgin from Elisabeth's house'¹²), and, 'the Nativity': To the left of the scene, Mary reclined on a double bean-shaped bed, decorated at head and foot level by a broad band containing a rosette pattern. Mary's upper body and face were turned towards the beholder. She wore a halo and her face with its large dark eyes, straight nose and small mouth was fairly

⁸ Clédat 1999, 109, Fig. 21. Whether this doorway was situated in the eastern or the western part of the south wall is not clear. Clédat's description is confusing: '... la porte, à droite, de la paroi sud.'

⁹ Clédat 1999, 110-111, 116-117, Photos 97-101, 119.

¹⁰ Clédat 1999, 114-115, Photos 115-120.

¹¹ Chapel III, north wall (Clédat 1904-1906, 16-17, Pls XIIa-XIII); Chapel VII, east wall (Clédat 1904-1906, 38, Pl. XXVII); Chapel XXXIII, north wall (Clédat 1916, 17-18); Chapel XXXV, north wall (Clédat 1916, 24, Pl. XIV; Clédat 1999, Photos 28-32).

¹² Clédat 1904, 524-125; also Dorese 2000 2', 323 and Rutschowskaya in Catalogue Athens 2000, 274. Since this scene is, as far as I know, not depicted, it seems an unlikely theme. Moreover, Joseph is present.



Pl. 1. Chapel LI, east wall: niche (EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet, C 2251)



Pl. 2. Chapel LI, east wall, northern part: equestrian saints (EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet C 2261)



Pl. 3. Chapel LI, south wall, saints and monks (EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet, C 2269)

well preserved. As in the preceding scenes, she was dressed in a long tunic with long tight sleeves, a light coloured headscarf and a *maphorion*. The garments bedecked her feet.

To her left, the midwife was standing, her arms stretched out towards the Virgin. Salomé was depicted in a three-quarter pose and looked at the beholder. She had a square nimbus. Her eyes were large and dark with heavily marked eyebrows and she had a straight nose and a small mouth. Her hair was dark and finely detailed and she was dressed in an ankle-length tunic with a broad band at the hem and a dark *maphorion*. Her arms seemed to be bare. Just above Salomé's shoulders, a dark horizontal line divided the background. Fragments of a decorative border below the scenes are visible on the photographs (Pls 4-8)¹³. Under the paintings, a long dedicatory inscription runs along the north, east and south walls (the western part had already disappeared). The text gives a list of names of monks but unfortunately no indication of a date of the building or the murals¹⁴.

Clédât hesitated between dating the paintings in this building to the sixth-seventh or to the eighth-ninth century¹⁵. It is still not possible to narrow this date down: little is known of the architecture of the building, ceramics or other finds in the room itself have neither been reported nor preserved. In

¹³ Clédât 1904, 524-525, Fig. 4; Clédât 1999, 113, Photos 109-113; cf. Walters 1974, 283.

¹⁴ Clédât 1999, 116-117, Photos 100-101, 119.

¹⁵ Clédât 1999, 110 and n. 63, 112. The only dated set of paintings was found on the west wall of Chapel XVII: inscriptions give the years 735, 737 and 739 (Clédât 1904-1906, 84-85; Delattre, forthcoming. For the paintings in this chapel: Clédât 1904/06, 73-83; Bolman 2001). Paintings uncovered during the season 2005 were, on the basis of ceramics and coins found in the room in conjunction with style, dated more securely to the end of the sixth century-first half of the seventh century. These murals were found in the northern section of the monastic complex, to the south of Rooms 5-6 (see Fig. 1; www.louvre.fr/media/repository/ressources/sources/pdf/src_document_51210_v2_m56577569830669676.pdf; *Nouvelles fouilles sur le site copte de Baouit*, 4).



Pl. 4. Chapel LI, north wall, view (EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet, C 2254)



Pl. 5. Chapel LI, north wall, Annunciation (EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet, C 2257)



Pl. 6. Chapel LI, north wall, Visitation (EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet, C 2258)



*Pl. 7. Chapel LI, north wall, Journey to Bethlehem
(EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet, C 2258 and C 2256)*



*Pl. 8. Chapel LI, north wall, Virgin Mary and Salomé
(EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet, C 2256)*



*Pl. 9. Chapel LI, north wall, angel, the Virgin Mary and Salomé
(EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet, C 2256)*

this case, style is not a reliable tool for dating. Further research on site by the Bawit excavation team might, in the future, yield a more secure date.

Clédât stated that originally only the upper parts of the south and north walls, the tympanums, and the vault of Chapel LI were decorated with paintings. Later, the room was repaired (?) and a second layer of plaster was applied to the lower part of the north wall. Standing persons were painted onto this layer¹⁶. There are no remaining images of these figures.

He described the last scene of the north wall as ‘...“la sage-femme Salomé”...étendant les mains vers Marie pour recevoir l’Enfant. Le sujet tiré d’un Apocryphe est étrange en lui-même, puisqu’il est incomplet. On s’attendrait donc à trouver un cinquième épisode qui nous montrerait l’Enfant.’¹⁷ The study of this scene started with a basic problem: the photograph published in Clédât’s 1904 article gave rise to misinterpretation. Until 1999, this was the only photograph published, and as such was reprinted in numerous books and articles. It shows an angel, the reclining Virgin and Salomé (Pl. 9). Since the other scenes remained unknown to the general scholarly public, several authors interpreted the angel to be part of ‘the Nativity’¹⁸. In reality, the angel is part of the previous scene; he was leading the donkey/horse on the Journey to Bethlehem (as Clédât stated). In reproductions of the photograph, the bridle of the animal, held by the angel, was fairly indistinguishable.

The scene of Mary and Salomé is the end of the series and behind Salomé is a plant motif. The same motif is found at the beginning, behind the Virgin of the Annunciation. Cogently, the right side of the tympanum above sloped down, indicating the end of the wall. The cycle neither continued on the east wall (on this level there were equestrian saints and their companions) nor did it follow through on the corresponding south wall. The latter wall was pierced by windows and a doorway and was decorated with saints. A hypothesized continuation of the cycle on the west wall is unlikely. In conclusion, there seem to be just four scenes: Annunciation, Visitation, Journey to Bethlehem and the last, our enigmatic encounter between two women.

A classic Nativity scene in the sixth-eighth centuries consists of the Virgin, a manger with child, an ox and an ass, Joseph, a star and often shepherds and an angel. Salomé may be present. Components may vary according to the space available

but there is one golden rule: the Child is always there¹⁹. In this case, His omission is not so much a lack of space. Should the building (Elisabeth’s house) have been left out, there would have been enough place for a manger and Child. And there is another enigmatic aspect in this scene: Salomé’s square halo.

WHO WAS SALOMÉ?

In the Synaxarion, the Calendar of Saints of the Coptic Church (the oldest manuscripts dating from the fourteenth century), the midwife Salomé is regarded as a maternal cousin of the Virgin Mary. The high priest Mathat/Matthan had three daughters: Mary, Sophia and Anna. Mary had a daughter called Salomé who was a midwife; Sophia’s daughter was Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist and Anna’s daughter was the Blessed Virgin. Salomé was one of the first persons to adore the Christ child and she accompanied the Holy Family on their flight into Egypt. She belonged to the group of women that followed Christ during the years of His ministry until His Resurrection and Ascension²⁰. A similar genealogy (sometimes highly elaborated) can be found in writings of (earlier) Greek fathers²¹. In short, Salomé belonged to the family and was always around.

The earliest source on the Life of the Virgin and the Infancy of Christ, is the well known apocryphal

¹⁶ Clédât 1999, 109, 114.

¹⁷ Clédât 1904, 525; Doresse 2000 2’, 323.

¹⁸ E.g. Ladner 1941, 24, Fig. 7; Hermann 1967, 66, Pl. 2b; Walters 1974, 283; Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1976, col. 208; Jastrzębowska 1994, 357.

¹⁹ Wilhelm 1970, cols 95-101; Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1976, cols 203-212.

²⁰ Forget 1921-1926/1, 114 and 500; On the manuscripts and editions of the Synaxarion see Coquin 1991, 2172-2173. A Sahidic fragment of a *Life of the Virgin* says that Anna (mother of the Virgin) and Elisabeth were “the daughters of two sisters”, maternal cousins (Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Clarendon B 3 14; ed. and trans. Robinson 1896, 12-13).

²¹ Epiphanius the Monk in his *Life of the Virgin* (CANT 91; written between 783-813, cf. Mimouni 1994, 223-228). Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 315-403) calls one of the daughters of Joseph’s first marriage Salomé (*Ancoratus* 60; PG 43:123-124). The fourteenth-century historian Nicephorus Callistus tells the same story as Epiphanius the Monk, adding that Joseph’s first wife was called Salomé while stressing that she was not Salomé the midwife who was a maternal cousin of the Virgin (*Ecclesiasticae Historiae* II, 3; PG 145:759-760).

Protevangelium of James, dating from the second century and most probably written in Egypt²². Mary and Joseph were on their way to Bethlehem

²² CANT 50; De Strycker 1961, 412-423. For a critical evaluation of the composition theories of the *Protevangelium*, see Zervos 2004, 81-91.

A woman called Salomé plays a role in the Greek *Gospel of the Egyptians* (CANT 14; Elliott 1993, 16-19), the *Gnostic Gospel of Thomas* (logion 61b; CANT 19), *The first Apocalypse of James* (Nag Hammadi V, 3; ed. and trans. Veilleux 1986, 19-114) and the *Pistis Sophia* (CANT 28), in Manichean Psalms (ed. and trans. Allberry 1938, *Psalms of Heracleides* 187-202, esp. 192 and 194 and *Psalms of Thomas* XVI, 222-223), as well as in writings of sects as the Carpocratians (cf. Hermann 1967, 70-71; Trautmann 1983, 68-70). Sometimes, she is one of Christ's disciples but mostly she has no function. Since her identity is not clear and these texts have no bearing on the role of the midwife in the Nativity, they will not be included in the discussion.

²³ De Strycker 1961, 154-167; English trans. Elliott 1993, 64-65. The Salomé-episode is often compared with the doubt of Thomas (John 20:24-29). What happened to Salomé's hand or arm is described as "consumed by fire" (*Protevangelium* XX, 1; De Strycker 1961, 160-161. Cf. Zeno of Verona, *Tractatus* II 8, ed. Löfstedt 1971, 129, trans. Bigelmair 1934, 223), or "withered" (*Pseudo-Matthew*, see following note, esp. Gijssels 1997, 422-423).

²⁴ CANT 51; Gijssels 1997, 67 (created between the middle of the sixth-end eighth century, probably in the first quarter of the seventh century) and 416-426.

The so-called *Arabic Infancy Gospel* (CANT 58; Elliott 1993, 100-107; Genequand 1997) '...is likely to go back to a Syrian archetype, which could be of the fifth-sixth century'. It is handed down in various, much later, manuscripts, the text embellished with fantasy details, reminiscent of "Thousand and One Nights". The midwife has no name and is an old Jewish woman who comes to the cave with Joseph to find it brightly illuminated and the child in Mary's arms. In (probably) the oldest version preserved, there is no question of doubt although the woman asks to be healed of a withered (?) hand because of her unbelief. Mary tells her to hold the child (Elliott 1993, 100-103). In another version there is a midwife but the healing scene is omitted (Genequand 1997, 213-214).

²⁵ Manchester, John Rylands Library 72 (Ms. Crawford 36; Crum 1909, 36; trans. Robinson 1896, 196-197).

²⁶ *Homily on the Incarnation* attributed to Demetrius of Antioch: New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M 596 (871/872 AD, fol. 1r-19v, provenance: Monastery of St Michael, near present-day Hamuli (Fayyum); Depuydt 1993/I, 305-309: no. 158; ed. and trans. Modras 1994, 47-85, esp. 65-67) and M 597 (AD 914, fol. 1r-45v, provenance: *idem*; Depuydt 1993 I, 205-207: no. 107; ed. and trans. Modras 1994, 87-131, esp. 107-109), London, British Library Ms. Or. 7027, 1004 A.D., fol. 21b-73a, provenance: Esna (Layton 1987, 192-194: no. 161; Ed. and trans. Budge 1915, 74-119 and 652-698, esp. 94-96 and 673-675; Modras 1994, 133-177). For an introduction and comparison of these manuscripts, see Modras 1994, 13-37.

when Mary felt the pangs of the approaching birth. After having taken her into a cave, Joseph went out to find a midwife. He found one: 'XIX.2. *And they stopped at the entrance to the cave, and behold, a bright cloud overshadowed the cave. And the midwife said, "My soul is magnified today, for my eyes have seen wonderful things; for salvation is born to Israel". And immediately the cloud disappeared from the cave and a great light appeared, so that our eyes could not bear it. A short time afterwards that light withdrew until the baby appeared, and it came and took the breast of its mother Mary. And the midwife cried, "This day is great for me, because I have seen this new sight."* 3. *And the midwife came out of the cave, and Salome met her. And she said to her, "Salome, Salome, I have a new sight to tell you about; a virgin has brought forth, a thing which her condition does not allow."* And Salome said, "As the Lord my God lives, unless I insert my finger and test her condition, I will not believe that a virgin has given birth."

They went in together and Salome tested Mary's condition. Immediately 'XX.1 ...*she cried out, saying, "Woe for my wickedness and my unbelief; for I have tempted the living God; and behold, my hand falls away from me, consumed by fire!"* She prayed to God and an angel appeared and said to her 3. ...*"Salome, Salome, the Lord God has heard your prayer. Bring your hand to the child and touch him and salvation and joy will be yours."* 4. *And Salome came near and touched him, saying, "I will worship him, for a great king has been born to Israel."* And Salome was healed as she had requested, and she went out of the cave...²³

A virtually similar story can be found in the sixth-eighth century Latin *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, which undoubtedly has strong roots in the *Protevangelium of James*. In the *Pseudo-Matthew*, both women, Zahel/Zelomi and Salomé, are called midwives. When Joseph found them, they went to the cave together²⁴.

A second Egyptian tradition is attested to by an undated Sahidic fragment in Manchester (Rylands 72)²⁵ and a Sahidic homily attributed to Demetrius of Antioch. The latter text is preserved in three manuscripts, the oldest dated A.D. 871/872²⁶. Joseph goes out to find a midwife and meets Salomé. She goes with him and upon seeing Mary and the Child she immediately believes in the virginal birth and Christ as the Son of God. In the sermon she worships first the Child and then Mary. From that moment, she stays with the family till the

resurrection of Christ. In this tradition, there is only Salomé, in Rylands 72 called 'the midwife', in the Demetrius-text she has no profession, and there is no mention at all of doubt and an injured hand.

The Borgia collection preserves a fragment of a narrative which says that when Mary felt the birth of her child approaching, Joseph took her to an inn. She asked him to go out and look for a midwife. The text ends with the birth of the Child in Joseph's absence²⁷. A small (undated) fragment in the British Museum, most likely the final part of a homily, ends with 'The shepherds became worthy, the magi became holy, Salome became free.'²⁸

In Paris, four fragments are preserved which tell about the conversion of Salomé, the daughter of Simeon or daughter of Abimelek and sister of Simeon, who lived a life of riches and sin as a prostitute before being rescued by her father/brother and baptized. The fragments are dated to the ninth-tenth century and although they are not part of one manuscript, they clearly belong to one tradition. After some lacunae, one of these fragments ends with Joseph, looking for a midwife and meeting Salomé²⁹.

Salomé accompanies the Holy Family in texts describing the Flight into Egypt. She takes care of the Child and of the household chores but has no active role in the proceedings. Following tradition (and Demetrius' sermon) she is identified with the woman/midwife who was present at the Nativity³⁰.

In the Gospel of Mark, one of the women following Christ, who was present at His death and, on the morning of the Resurrection, visited the empty tomb with spices, is called Salomé (Mk 15:40 and 16:1). She is simply called Salomé without family connections but Bible commentaries mostly identify her with the mother of the sons of Zebedee, the apostles James and John, and she may have been a cousin of the Virgin Mary³¹. The Coptic *Book of the Resurrection of Christ by the Apostle Bartholomew* calls one of the women visiting the tomb 'Salomé the temptress'. According to the editors, Salomé mentioned in the Gospel of Mark is identified as Salomé of the *Protevangelium*, who tempted God by wanting to verify Mary's virginity, because she doubted the virginal birth³².

A fragment of a Bohairic homily on Christ's burial and the visit of the women to the tomb (a retelling of Mark 15) is preserved in the John Rylands Library. One of the women is called

Salomé, a rich and deeply religious woman who had requested to join the group. The angel present assumed the guise of a young man, in order not to frighten Salomé, who was not used to the sight of angels. Crum suggested that this Salomé was confused with the rich harlot converted by Simeon, thereby implying a connection with the midwife. The text indicates no direct link between the two: the woman is called Salomé without any suggestion of family connections or provenance. Observing the way she is presented, she may have been an outsider³³.

In one of the Coptic Dormition of the Virgin traditions, Salomé is among the virgins present at Mary's death. Again, there is no indication of her identity³⁴.

²⁷ Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Borgia CXVIII (Sahidic, undated; Robinson 1896, xxi and (ed. and trans.) 20-21).

²⁸ London, British Museum, Or. 3581A(64), Sahidic, parchment, from Achmim (Crum 1905, 106-107: no. 237).

²⁹ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Copte 129/17-18, fols 39, 40, 159 (ed. and trans. Warns 1982; first publication by Revillout 1905 with corrections in 1906 by Von Lemm (1972, 441-446); cf. Trautmann 1983, 62-63: 11th-12th century).

³⁰ For a list of manuscripts of the Flight into Egypt, see Boud'hors/Boutros 2000, 60-68 and Davis 2001; Salomé accompanying the family is also mentioned in *the Death of Joseph the Carpenter*, whose composition might go back to the seventh century (CANT 60; Boud'hors 2005, esp. 38-39).

³¹ Odelain/Séguineau 1981, 324b. The "Mother of Zebedee's children" (without proper name) is mentioned in Mt. 20:20 and 27:55.

³² CANT 80; Kaestli/Cherix 1997, 322 (trans.) and 302: origin of text in fifth-sixth century; Westerhoff 1999, 94-95 (ed. and trans.), 200 n. 12 and 226-227: origin of text in eighth-ninth century; cf. Elliott 1993, 652-655, 669; Trautmann 1983, 67-68.

³³ Manchester, John Rylands Library 436 (Ms. Crawford 41): one page, undated. Likely provenance: Wadi an-Natrun (Crum 1909, vii and 216).

³⁴ For example in the Bohairic *Sermon on the Assumption of the Virgin* attributed to Evodius of Rome (CANT 134; Mimouni 1995, 198-201; dated ca. 950, provenance Monastery of St. Macarius, Wadi an-Natrun; trans. Robinson 1896, 44-67); fragment of a Sahidic recension in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Cod. Clarend. B 3 15 (ed. and trans. Robinson 1896, xxv and 70-89); Sahidic *Homily on the Virgin Mary*, attributed to Evodius of Rome, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M 596 (871/872 AD, fol. 19r-26v, provenance: Monastery of St Michael, near present-day Hamuli (Fayyum); Depuydt 1993/I, 305-309: no. 158) and M 598 (ca. 822/823-913/914 AD, fol. 1r-8v, provenance: idem; Depuydt 1993/I, 309-311: no. 159; ed. and trans. Shoemaker 1999).

In conclusion, Salomé the midwife as a relative of the Virgin is found relatively late in Egypt, in the Synaxaria. In earlier texts, she is part of Nativity stories, as a midwife or without qualification. Incontrovertibly it is she who doubts the virginal birth, is punished, repents and then is healed, after which she adores the Child as the Son of God and goes her way (*Protevangelium*). However, when she is the only woman/midwife mentioned, she immediately believes in the virginal birth, adores the Child and stays with the family (Rylands 72 and Demetrius' sermon). In all cases, the child was already born when Salomé or the two women appear on the stage. They are the first to worship Christ, even before the shepherds. Apart from bringing forth the Child, the Virgin has no active role: she submits to the testing or is simply present, without speaking. The four fragments in Paris give a background picture but do not add any information to Salomé's role in the Nativity.

When a woman called Salomé is included in groups of women accompanying Christ during his public life, death and Resurrection, or in the

Dormition of the Virgin traditions, often too little is said to be able to relate her with certainty to Salomé the midwife. Confusion with other women called Salomé seems evident³⁵. The fact that the Salomé visiting the empty tomb tends to be identified with the midwife might add a level of interpretation: She was among the first witnesses to Christ's birth and now she is one of the first witnesses of His Resurrection³⁶. Unfortunately, I have found no textual evidence yet to support this theory.

Some church fathers who raised the episode of Salomé in the Nativity, most probably referred to the *Protevangelium*: Clement of Alexandria (died ca 215) spoke of the presence of a midwife and the testing of Mary's virginity as did Zeno of Verona (died ca 380)³⁷. Prudentius (fourth century) mentioned a midwife in a Christmas hymn³⁸. The midwife story was contradicted, for example, by Jerome who denied the attendance of midwives at the Nativity: Mary needed no help from human beings during the delivery of her Son³⁹. In fact, as we have seen, in all versions of the story she did bear her child alone: Joseph and the woman/women arrive to find Mary holding the child. Unfortunately, as the textual evidence does not offer any elucidation of the painting in Bawit, it is now time to turn to the monuments preserved. How was Salomé depicted on them?

ICONOGRAPHICAL COMPARISON

Salomé appears for the first time in fifth-sixth century Nativity scenes, where she is shown presenting her injured arm or hand. In the same period, the 'First Bath of the Infant' emerges. One of the women (or the only woman present) bathing Christ is often interpreted as the midwife Salomé. This motif has no textual source and the iconography follows such mythological scenes as the bath of Dionysos. Both scenes can be found in eastern and western art⁴⁰.

When Salomé is present, she directs herself to the Virgin or to the Child in the manger. When she is depicted close to the Child, she is presenting her injured arm or hand in order to be healed as recounted in the *Protevangelium* and *Pseudo-Matthew*. We find her on such ivories as a plaque in the British Museum (first half of the sixth century; Pl. 10). The upper part of the plaque is dedicated to the Adoration of the Magi: Mary enthroned with the Christ child on her lap is surrounded by the three

³⁵ Cf. Bienert 1990, 386.

³⁶ This idea was elaborated in Medieval Western art and liturgical drama (Toubert 1996).

³⁷ Clement of Alexandria: *Stromateis* VII, XVI 93,7 (ed. and trans. Le Boulluec 1997, 284-285; De Strycker 1961, 412-413); Zeno of Verona, *Tractatus* II 8 (ed. Löfstedt 1971, 128-129; trans. Bigelmair 1934, 222-223).

³⁸ *Liber Cathemerinon*, hymn XI (ed. and trans. Van de Laar 1994, 118-119).

³⁹ In *De perpetua virginitate B. Mariae, Adversus Helvidium* (PL 23:201). The (apocryphal) *Ascension of Isaiah* recalls a miraculous birth without a midwife being present (Norelli 1997, esp. 541-542). Ode 19 of the *Odes of Solomon* also seems to deny the presence of a midwife. However, this "ode étrange et difficile" is hard to interpret (Pierre 1997, esp. 709-710; cf. Hermann 1967, 70).

⁴⁰ Hermann 1967; Wilhelm 1970, col. 95-101; Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1976, col. 203-212.

In Palestine, a cave chapel in Ḥorvat Qaşra, not far from the road which leads from Bethlehem to Egypt, was dedicated to a Saint Salomé. Di Segni and Patrich think that she might have been Salomé the midwife. The story of the midwife and the bath of Christ were already known in seventh century Bethlehem, evidence of which can be found in pilgrims' accounts (cf. Hermann 1967, 71; Deshman 1989, 33-34; Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1976, col. 208). Although there is no evidence that she was officially a saint, she was held in some veneration. Originally, the chapel was a Second Temple Period tomb and the authors suggest that '... the cave may have been consecrated following the discovery of an inscription attesting the burial of a woman named Salome...' (Di Segni/Patrich 1990, 32*-33*).



Pl. 10. London, British Museum,
ivory with Adoration of Magi and Nativity
(© Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum)

magi and an angel. In the lower part, the Virgin is depicted to the left, reclining on a mattress and Salomé is holding her injured hand out in a pleading gesture to the Child in the manger, flanked by the ox and the ass and a star above. None of the persons has a nimbus⁴¹. An almost similar ivory from a slightly later period is preserved in Manchester⁴² and we find the image on a pyxis in Berlin (fifth-sixth century)⁴³. In Rome, two monumental examples are known from literature, a painting in the Saint Valentino Catacomb (middle of the seventh century) and a mosaic in the Vatican chapel of John VIII (beginning of the eighth century). Both have disappeared⁴⁴. In Venice, on one of the sculptured ciborium columns of the main altar of the San Marco

(first quarter sixth century), Salomé is kneeling in front of the manger, but looking more in the direction of the enthroned Virgin to the right than at the Child⁴⁵.

When Salomé is depicted near the Virgin, she is shown in three different poses. In a seventh-eighth-century wall painting in the church of Wadi es-Sebu'a, she is kneeling, almost prostrating herself, in front of Mary's bed adoring the Virgin (Fig. 3). This pose is found in Nubian wall painting only⁴⁶. In one of the panels of the throne of Bishop Maximian in Ravenna (middle of the sixth

⁴¹ London, British Museum, inv. no. M&LA 1904, 7-2.1. Provenance: Eastern Mediterranean, possibly Syria or Palestine (Catalogue Athens 2000, 266-267: A. Eastmond).

⁴² Manchester, John Rylands Library, Rylands Ivories 6. Provenance: Syria (?) (Catalogue New York 1977, 509-510: E. Lucchesi-Palli)

⁴³ Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, SMB-PK, MSB, inv. no. 585. Provenance: Eastern Mediterranean, possibly Syria, Palestine or Egypt (Catalogue Berlin 1992, 136-137: H.-G. Severin).

⁴⁴ San Valentino: Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1976, col. 210-211; Hermann 1967, Abb. 5; Deshman 1989, Fig. 3. Chapel of John VIII: Deshman 1989, Fig. 11; Lasagni 2003, Fig. 8.

The Italian examples (also in Santa Maria Antiqua and Castelseprio; see below) are noted for their Eastern Mediterranean influence (Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1976, col. 210-211, with literature; Deshman 1989, 36)

⁴⁵ Venice, San Marco, Altar ciborium, north-west column (alabaster), lowest zone (Weigel 1997, 269 (column B- zone 1) and Fig. 34). The provenance and the date of these columns are much debated. Weigel, in his monograph on the columns, concludes that they are sixth-century works from the Eastern Mediterranean, possibly Constantinople (Weigel 1997, 22-84 and 254-257).

⁴⁶ Church in the hypostyle hall of the temple of Ramses II. The surviving part of the mural, the fragment with Salomé, is now in Cairo, Coptic Museum. The Nubian Nativity scenes which have been preserved have a similar core composition: a seated Virgin on cushions laid on an ornate, throne-like bed with Joseph at her feet and the Child in a tomb-like manger to her right. In murals where the part below the Virgin is preserved, Salomé is kneeling in front of the bed. Later examples were i.a. found in Faras Cathedral (Khartoum, National Museum; beginning of the eleventh century), Faras Rivergate Church (not preserved, second half of the twelfth century) and in Old Dongola, the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Kom H (*in situ*, thirteenth century; photographs of these paintings in Scholz 2002, 217a, Pls XXXVIII-XXXIX). Therefore, damaged scenes as for example a painting from the beginning of the eighth century in Faras Cathedral and in Abd el-Qadir (mid-thirteenth century, both in Khartoum, National Museum; photographs in Scholz 2002, 217b-218c) may also have included Salomé.

century), Salomé holds out her injured hand and shows it to the Virgin (Pl. 11). In two wall paintings, a fragment in Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome (eighth century) and a painting in the Church of the Virgin in Castelseprio (eighth-ninth century) a similar scene is depicted⁴⁷.

The recently uncovered wall painting in Bawit, part of a cycle, shows a Nativity with shepherds (end of sixth-first half of seventh century). The upper part of the painting (including the faces) has disappeared. It was painted on a long wall of a rectangular building, on the upper part of the wall, just below the vault. A reconstruction of plaster fragments found in the room is in progress and will add to knowledge of the composition. The reclining Virgin is depicted on the far left, with to her left, a large masonry manger with the seated Joseph in front of the right corner. Shepherds with sheep and



Pl. 11. Panel of the Throne of Bishop Maximian (Ravenna, Museo arcivescovile; after Volbach 1976, Pl. 73)

⁴⁷ Throne of Bishop Maximian, Ravenna, Museo arcivescovile: Volbach 1976, 93-94 (no. 140), Pl. 73; wall painting Santa Maria Antiqua: Lasagni 2003, Fig. 10; wall paintings Castelseprio: Hermann 1967, Pl. 1d; Lasagni 2003, Fig. 11.

⁴⁸ Photograph and information: www.louvre.fr/media/repository/ressources/sources/pdf/src_document_51210_v2_m56577569830669676.pdf, 4.

The building is 8.75 m long and 5.33 m wide. Its function is still unspecified. The Nativity is part of a cycle of the Infancy of Christ: First dream of Joseph, Journey to Bethlehem, Nativity, Presentation in the Temple, and the Adoration of the Magi. The lower part of the wall showed figurative and floral designs. The vibrant colours of the paintings are particularly remarkable.

⁴⁹ Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes, inv. no. E 13945 (Catalogue Athens 2000 274-275: M.-H. Rutschowskaya).

⁵⁰ It is remarkable that in Egypt, in the period discussed, monumental Nativity scenes (with or without Salomé) have rarely been found up to now. In the northern semi-dome of the Church of the Virgin in the Monastery of the Syrians (Wadi an-Matrum) fragments of a Nativity have come to light. In the near future, the upper layer, decorated with the Dormition of the Virgin will be removed. (Innemée in Innemée/Van Rompay 2002, [11]). Nativity scenes without Salomé are mainly preserved on textiles (for a list see Jastrzębowska 1992, 297-304). A small painted wooden panel is kept in Moscow, Pushkin Museum (Jastrzębowska 1992, 249). Some examples can be found in a series of small scenes from the Life of Christ on silver bracelets (comparable to cycles on pilgrim's ampullae (Jastrzębowska 1992, 289-290). For bronze censers with cycles of the Life of Christ said to have come from Egypt, see Bénazeth 2001, 318. Jean Dorese mentions a fragment of a relief with a Nativity scene in Cairo, Coptic Museum (Dorese 2000 2', 323, n. 244: unpublished, provenance Middle Egypt). Dorese might have had in mind a small limestone fragment, showing a reclining woman on a bean-shaped bed

a dog are painted at the far right. In front of the manger, directed towards the Virgin, kneels Salomé. Only the lower part of the figure is preserved. She is dressed in an ochre yellow ankle-length garment, decorated with tabulae and swathed in a dark red garment (shawl?) at breast and shoulder level. Her arms are bare and she holds her right arm, which has been coloured a bright orange: 'consumed by fire' as stated in the *Protevangelium of James* and in the discourse of Zeno of Verona⁴⁸.

A textile embroidered with silks of Egyptian provenance in the Louvre, dated to the sixth-eighth centuries⁴⁹ shows Salomé looking to the Virgin, oblivious of the rest of the company. Her right hand points to Mary, the position of her left hand is not clear. A dark rectangle around her head against a light-coloured background gives an impression of a square halo. Joseph is depicted in the lower right-hand corner. The Child is placed above with the ox and the ass and two angels (Pl. 12)⁵⁰.

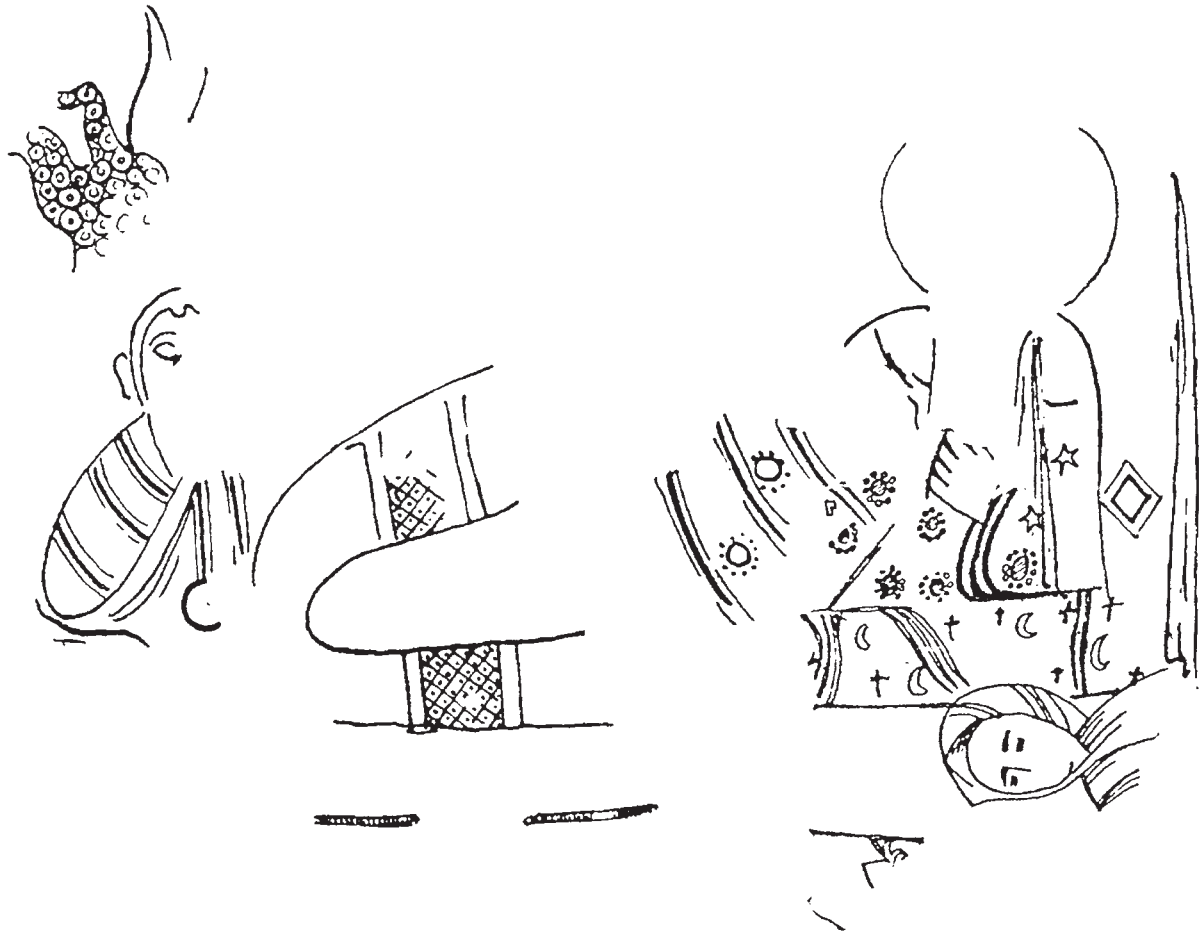


Fig. 3. Wadi es-Sebua, Nativity with Salomé (reconstruction by D. Zielinska, based on Medic 1965, Fig. 14 and Monneret de Villard 1935, Fig. 73)

In a fragment of a lead *ampulla* from Palestine, now in Bonn (sixth-seventh century), the Virgin and Salomé are placed at the extreme right. Salomé is not holding out her injured arm but is approaching Mary with what seems to be outstretched hands (Pl. 13)⁵¹. A gold medallion in Munich with a wedding scene is decorated on the obverse showing the Annunciation, and below in two smaller scenes, the Visitation and the Nativity (Eastern Mediterranean; early sixth-early seventh century). Salomé is depicted to the right of the Virgin, in a similar composition (Pl. 14)⁵².

When the depiction of Mary and Salomé in the latter two images is isolated from the rest of the scene, the similarity to the painting in Chapel LI is striking. Are we, in the latter examples, dealing with a

with a person sitting on the far left (Cairo, Coptic Museum, inv. no. 6126, h. 18 cm, w. 27.5 cm). The position and pose of the sitting person points to Joseph (head resting on the left hand, staff in right hand). To the right of the reclining woman, the fragment is damaged. The fragment will be published in the Sculpture Catalogue of the Coptic Museum by H.-G. Severin.

⁵¹ Engemann 1973.

⁵² Munich, Christian Schmidt Collection, inv. no. 378 (Catalogue Athens 2000, 290-291: J. Deckers).

A study of the fragment in Bonn and the gold medallion in Munich made clear that, originally, Salomé must have been part of a Nativity archetype. There are a number of Nativity scenes without a midwife where the position of the Virgin is difficult to explain. If Salomé had been added in a comparable attitude as in the scenes discussed above, the image makes perfect sense. See for example an ivory book cover in Erevan (Etschmiadzin) from the sixth century (Volbach 1976, 94-95: no. 142 and Pl. 75) and a pilgrim *ampulla* in Monza (Engemann 1973, Pls 5c-d).



*Pl. 12. Silk embroidery
(Paris, Musée du Louvre; courtesy of the Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes, section copte)*



Pl. 13. Bonn, Franz-Joseph Dölger Institut, fragment of ampulla (courtesy of the F.-J. Dölger-Institut)

slightly earlier moment in the tradition of the *Protevangelium*, the testing of Mary's virginity? Or is the tradition of Rylands 72 and the Demetrius-text, where Salomé immediately believes that a virgin has given birth and the injured hand does not occur, of more importance here? As far as I know, these texts are preserved only in the Coptic tradition.

In Nativity narratives and representations, Salomé (midwife or not, either hesitant or believing) is instrumental in stressing the doctrine that Mary remained a virgin during the conception, pregnancy and delivery of her Child⁵³. The images may focus on different phases in the narratives but in fact, all bear the same message.

If virginity, the perpetual virginity of Mary, is to be understood as the central theme in the painting in Chapel LI, as Grabar, Del Francia and Rutschowskaya have proposed (an explanation I agree with), the

absence of the Christ Child is understandable. However, it was because of the Child, because of having given birth and still remaining a virgin that the miracle of virginity is stressed. The reason for the choice of this particular iconography remains uncommon.

In this context, in Egypt there is an exceptional image of Salomé which should be mentioned. It is found in the Monastery of Saint Bishoi, the so-called Red Monastery near Sohag, south of Bawit. The northern semi-dome has a complicated iconographical programme showing the Virgin enthroned, nursing her Child, surrounded by four

⁵³ The terse expression of Augustine: '*Virgo concepit, virgo peperit, virgo permansit*' has become famous in this respect (*Sermo* 51, 11 (*PL* 38:343): Gijssels 1997, 420).



Pl. 14. Munich, Christian Schmidt collection, gold medallion (after *Catalogue Athens 2000*, 290)

prophets (to the left: Ezekiel and Jeremiah; to the right: Isaiah and Daniel) and four saints, depicted

on columns. The prophets hold scrolls with texts from their prophesy relating to the Virgin birth and therefore also to the Incarnation. In the upper register, at the far left and right, Joseph and Salomé look at her, both with haloes and identified by inscriptions. A preliminary date for the paintings in this semi-dome is the eighth-ninth century (see Pl. 2 of the article by E.S. Bolman in this volume)⁵⁴.

Salomé is finely dressed: she wears jewellery (a brooch and a necklace) and her hair is adorned with

⁵⁴ Bolman 2004, 7-8.

The paintings were documented by the Institut français d'archéologie orientale in Cairo (to be published by K.C. Innemée). At present, the murals in the Red Monastery are being restored and studied by an international team of restorers and art historians under direction of Elizabeth Bolman (See E.S. Bolman, 'Late Antique Aesthetics, Chromophobia, and the Red Monastery, Sohag, Egypt' in this volume, notes 1 and 4).

pearls. Her image seems to echo the earlier-mentioned homily attributed to Demetrius of Antioch. When Joseph, looking for a midwife, met Salomé standing on the roof of her house, ‘...he said unto her: Come down; and straightway, by the Holy Spirit Who came upon her, she made haste, and came down, and put on her finest apparel as if she knew that she was going to meet God.’⁵⁵ In this painting, as in Demetrius’ homily and Rylands 72, Joseph and Salomé are the first witnesses to God’s salvation.

The tradition of depicting Salomé in Nativity scenes lived on in Egypt, as a thirteenth-century wall painting in the Chapel of Takla Haymanot in the Hanging Church in Old Cairo shows. Here Salomé is kneeling in front of the tomb-like manger. Because of damage, the position of her hands cannot be distinguished. She is looking in the direction of the Virgin who is making a speaking gesture⁵⁶.

THE SQUARE NIMBUS

Another problem in the Bawit painting is Salomé’s square nimbus. Several studies have been devoted to the phenomenon of the square, or, in most instances, more accurately, the rectangular nimbus⁵⁷. The general rule seems to be that distinguished persons possessed of eminent qualities, still alive at the time their image was captured may have been given a square nimbus while the round one was reserved for biblical figures, saints and deceased holy persons. The use of the nimbus in general also varies, as can be seen in the images shown: sometimes all persons present are nimbed (the cycle in Bawit, Pls 6-10); sometimes some persons (and not always the most holy persons: gold medallion in Munich, Pl. 14) wear a nimbus or nobody wears a nimbus (ivory in the British Museum and panel on the throne of Bishop Maximian, Pls 10-11).

With regard to the square nimbus, confusion about its use in sixth-seventh century Egypt was evident as Elisabeth Jastrzębowska writes. There seemed to be no general rule and the square nimbus can be found in biblical scenes (Alexandria, Kom el-Shoqafa (Kharmouz), the Wescher Tomb: Multiplication of Bread and Fishes: the apostles Peter and Andrew; end of the third or fourth century?; Bawit, Chapel LI) as well as in portraits

(Bawit, Chapel LI; Saqqara, Monastery of Apa Jeremias, Chapel D and room 1727: portraits of Apa Jeremias; probably sixth-eighth centuries)⁵⁸.

As far as can be seen in Clédat’s photographs, nearly all the people depicted in Chapel LI have a nimbus. On the east wall, the small person next to the equestrian saint is the only one without a halo. The man between the horses has a square nimbus. On the north wall, just above Salomé, Brother Ion the Little, and most likely his companion, Brother Pedjosh also have a square nimbus. All other persons are attributed a round halo. In the case of the brothers and the attendant groom it may be conceivable that these men were still alive when the paintings were executed. Salomé is part of a scene and the only one in this cycle of narrative paintings with a square halo. Mary, Gabriel, Elisabeth and Joseph all have a round halo. Jastrzębowska argues that in this case (and in the silk embroidery in Paris, if Salomé is indeed wearing a square halo), a hierarchical principle may have been applied: Salomé is less important than the Virgin who has a round halo⁵⁹. Secondly, she is not a saint in her own right.

I am afraid that a satisfactory explanation of this feature is not yet possible. Ideas about its use might apply to particular situations but these do not seem to carry much weight generally speaking.

⁵⁵ London, British Library Ms. Or. 7027, ed. and trans. Budge 1915, 95 and 673 (Modras 1994, 153). Cf. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M 596 (ed. and trans. Modras 1994, 65-66) and M 597 (ed. and trans. Modras 1994, 107).

⁵⁶ Urbaniak-Walczak 1993.

⁵⁷ For example Ladner 1941 (description of the Egyptian examples: 23-26 and Figs 6-7) and more recently Jastrzębowska 1994 (348 n. 2-4: a bibliography on earlier research).

⁵⁸ Jastrzębowska 1994, 356-358. For the Wescher Tomb and painting see Venit 2002, 183-185, Figs 158-159 and 199; for the portraits of Apa Jeremias, see Quibell 1908, Pl. LX and Quibell 1912, Pl. XXIV. In a room to the right of the apse of a church in the Monastery of Qubbat al-Hawwa (near Aswan), five persons of a series of standing figures have a square halo. These paintings are dated to around 1100. The person at the far right in the eastern halfdome of the church of Dayr Anba Hadra (eleventh - twelfth century?) also has a square halo (Gabra 2002, 106-107, 112, Figs 10.2, 10.5-10.6 and 11.4).

⁵⁹ Jastrzębowska 1994, 358.

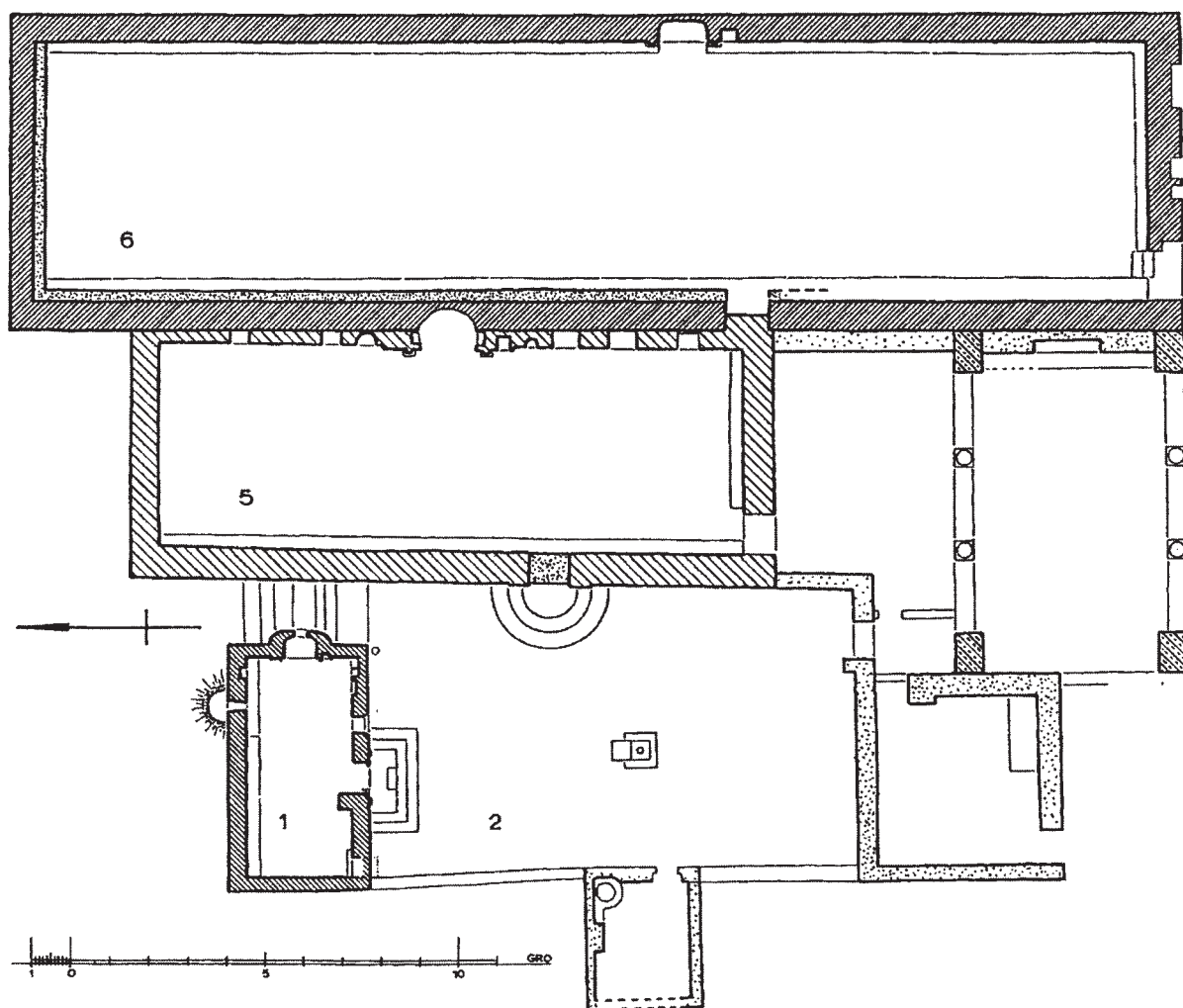


Fig. 4. Bawit, Rooms 5 and 6 (after Grossmann 2002, Fig. 143)

CONCLUSION AND EXCURSUS TO THE FUNCTION OF THE ROOM

The Annunciation, Visitation, Journey to Bethlehem and the Virgin and Salomé on the north wall is the only narrative cycle Clédât found in building LI. The niche in the east wall was decorated with a Christ enthroned. On the other walls, equestrian, standing and seated saints, the majority of them monastic saints, were painted with the founding father of the monastery in the upper part of the north wall, Apollo, and his close friends Anoup and Phib.

The underlying themes of the cycle are incarnation and virginity, the perpetual virginity of Mary. Although the Christ Child himself is absent, His

humanity and His divinity are made manifest. The iconography of the first three scenes fits into a broad tradition. The depiction of the Virgin and Salomé however, seems to be a component taken from a larger composition and accorded a value of its own. This does not obviate the question of why this was done. With some rearrangement, there would have been place to add at least the Child in the manger.

Another line which has to be pursued in looking for answers is to place the decoration of a room in context, to try to discover the function of the room or building and the relation between this function and the decoration. However, the brief description, the lack of plans and drawings and the incomplete photographic documentation make it

difficult to decide what kind of building No. LI was and for what it was used. Nevertheless, I can add some notes by way of exposition of these questions.

Clédât thought that this room was probably an oratory⁶⁰. The problem is that it seems far too large for a private oratory and there are no adjacent rooms in which to live or work. The rectangular shape with the niche in the long east wall and an entrance in the south bears resemblance to, for example, Rooms 5 and 6 in Bawit, excavated by Jean Maspero in 1913 (Figs 1, 4). Maspero thought that Room 6 was used as a reception room; he assigns no function to Room 5. Dozens of inscriptions were found, mainly in Room 6, mentioning not only monks but also people from outside the community who visited the monastery. The decoration preserved at that time consisted mainly of decorative motifs (lower part of the walls), Christ enthroned in the eastern niche and some fragments of standing persons (saints?)⁶¹. Peter Grossmann identified Rooms 5 and 6 as community oratories, spaces used by the monks for coming together and praying the Hours and Psalmody. Characteristic are the rectangular shape, the apsidal niche in the east wall (there may have been more, smaller niches), an entrance in a corner of the south wall, low benches along the wall(s) for seating and the barrel vault⁶².

From what is known about it, Chapel LI fits this description although the long benches were not noted or photographed by Clédât. One of the inscriptions found on the east wall says 'Be so good (and) pray! Pray continuously because of the angels of the Holy Offering and chant well'⁶³. If the room was a community oratory, and this inscription seems to point that way, the practice and content of praying the Hours and Psalmody may have influenced the choice of decoration. A reception room, in line with Maspero's idea, is also an option (the inscriptions copied in Chapel LI might also involve people from outside⁶⁴) and will be examined. Would perhaps a double function have been possible? Maybe these lines of research will, eventually, shed more light on the choice of the unusual iconography of the Virgin Mary and the midwife Salomé.

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⁶⁰ Clédât 1999, 109.

⁶¹ Maspero/Drioton 1931-1943, vi-viii, 18-23, 56-120 and Pl. XI D-XXV; Cf. Bénazeth 1995, 59-60; Bénazeth 2004, 12-13; Bénazeth 2005, 1-3. Cf. also Doresse 2000 2', 324-331. Sarah Clackson supported the identification as reception room (Clackson 2000, 6).

⁶² Grossmann 2002, 279-282 and Fig. 143.

⁶³ Clédât 1999, 120, inscription XV. With thanks to Jacques van der Vliet for emphasizing this graffito.

⁶⁴ Clédât 1999, 116-121.

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Guarding the Entrances: Equestrian Saints in Egypt and North Mesopotamia

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Mounted saints were a popular iconographical subject in the decoration of churches in the Middle East, especially in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria¹. The most frequently venerated of these oriental warrior saints are George, Theodore, Demetrius, Mercurius, Sergius, Bacchus, and Menas². According to their *Passions*, these saints were originally Roman soldiers who were martyred during the persecutions of Christians in the third and fourth centuries. They were soon considered true Christian warriors: soldiers of Christ. In a wide area to the East of the Byzantine Empire, stretching from Georgia in the north to Ethiopia in the south, these soldier martyrs are represented as triumphing cavalrymen, dressed as Roman soldiers, either with or without a defeated adversary at the feet of their horses. The enemy was depicted as a dragon, a ferocious beast or a prostrate human figure, all three being a general symbol of evil. Hence, the equestrian saints are generally seen as apotropaic epitomes of the eternal struggle between Good and Evil³.

Equestrian saints are mostly depicted in wall paintings found in the nave of a church, their number varying in accordance with the amount of space available. A good example of the common disposition is the Chapel of Deir Mar Musa al-Habashi in Syria (layer 3; ca 1200; Fig. 1), where no less than six mounted saints are depicted on the upper zone of the side walls, all galloping towards the East⁴. The north and south walls are not the only locations in which horsemen can be found; they are also displayed on the east wall, in close connection with the sanctuary. It is especially in this prominent position that the protective capacity of the soldier saints is fully exploited. This disposition is found in Lebanon and Syria perhaps only once, in the Church of Mar Elian in Homs, where the traces of a painted equestrian saint were discovered next to the apse (layer 1; ca 1150-1250)⁵. Given that mounted saints are usually depicted in pairs, probably as a result of the common preference for symmetry, a second rider on

the opposite site of the apse may be reconstructed here. The exceptional occurrence of this composition may be explained from the fact that there was simply enough room on the east wall to render a monumentally painted horseman on either side of the sanctuary, in contrast to other churches in the area. This suggests that there is a direct link between the existing architecture and the choice for this particular subject matter. Or to be more precise, the lack of space in most churches of Lebanon and Syria seems to have dictated the 'choice' to refrain from representing pairs of mounted saints on their east wall.

Juxtaposed equestrian saints figuring on the east wall appear to be more prominent in Egypt and North Mesopotamia, where several examples can be found dating from the eleventh to twelfth century and the thirteenth century, respectively. In these cases, the horsemen appear to be largely restricted to wood and stone carving, which are inherently less space-consuming than their painted counterparts. This suggests that the particular medium in which paired mounted saints are featured – in close connection with the local architectural tradition – made it possible to depict them on the east wall. In

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¹ Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 70-75; Immerzeel 2003a and 2004a.

² For a general introduction to the military saints, see Walter 2003a.

³ For instance, Bolman 2002, 61, 116-117; Immerzeel 2004a, 36; Thierry 1999; Walsh 1982, 96-98; Walter 2003a, 37, 42, 277.

⁴ Immerzeel 2004a, no. 17, with further references; Cruikshank Dodd 2001a, 50-56, 133-134, Pls IX-X, 27-33.

⁵ Immerzeel 2005b, 154, Fig. 1, Pl. 7.

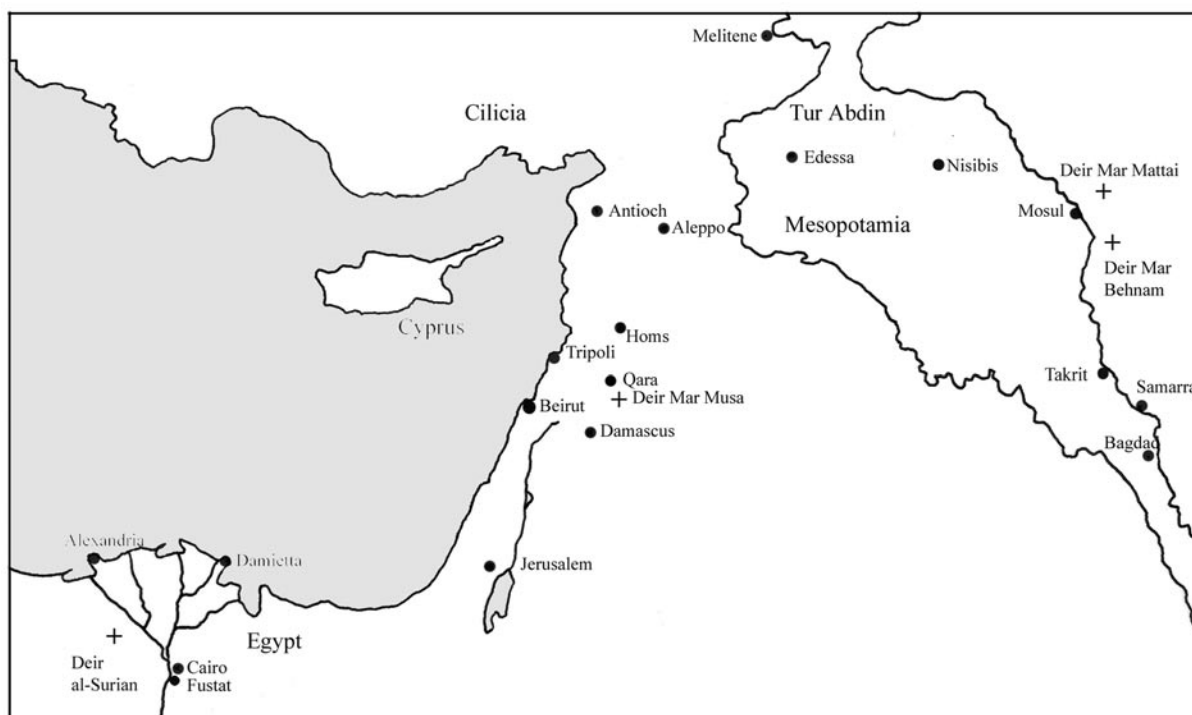


Fig. 1. Map of the Middle East (M. Immerzeel)

exploring this suggestion, the architectural traditions of the three regions will be taken into account. Moreover, the churches in Egypt are furnished with an extra zone of transition, the *khurus*, which opens up another possibility for artists to paint equestrian saints as sanctuary guardians.

Finally, of particular interest for the present study is the relationship with Islamic art, as in some instances the mounted saints seem to be represented in the guise of falconers, a motif apparently transplanted from a secular Islamic context to a

Christian one. This raises important questions about the influence of the Islamic artistic tradition on that of the Christians. Questions to be answered include those of why these specific images were chosen and how they should be interpreted.

EQUESTRIAN SAINTS IN EGYPT

The horseman pattern in Coptic Egypt

The image of the mounted saint is especially widespread in Egypt, where the oldest examples have survived, dating from the Early Christian period onwards⁶. In Chapel XVII at the Monastery of St Apollo in Bawit, for instance, several wall paintings dating from around the sixth century have been preserved, including representations of St Phoibammon and St Sisinnius on horseback, the latter spearing a woman named Alabasdris⁷. They are painted on either side of a shallow niche, in the western wall of the chapel. To these examples can be added a stone relief at the Coptic Museum in Cairo⁸, and a limestone relief from Bawit, showing an equestrian saint killing a snake

⁶ The outstanding popularity of the mounted saint in Coptic art has led Jules Leroy (1974, 214, 215 n. 1; 1975, 59 n. 3) to suggest that the Copts invented a 'mounted Christ' between two angels, which should be differentiated from the Entry into Jerusalem. This unique iconographical feature is encountered on a stone relief from Sohag, currently preserved in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, inv. no. I. 4131 (Badawy 1978, 195, Fig. 3.153). For other interpretations of this scene, see the discussion in Schiemenz 1986, 44-47, with further references.

⁷ Bolman 2002, 92, Figs 6.2-6.3; Brune 1999, 233, Pl. II.5; Walter 2003a, 37, 241-242, 271.

⁸ Zibawi 2003, 56, Fig. 52.

with his lance⁹. On a stone lintel from Sohag in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, probably dating from the ninth century, two confronted mounted saints are depicted, to the left and right of a cross within a wreath¹⁰. They are designated by Coptic inscriptions as St Pakene and St Victor. This short list can easily be extended with numerous other representations of equestrian saints, appearing in all different types of artistic media¹¹.

Previous authors concerned with the image of the mounted saint have firmly established its origins in images of Solomon on horseback killing a female demon, which are mainly found on magical amulets, bracelets and seals, from at least the third century onwards¹². These kinds of objects are also common in Syria. The iconographical type of Solomon was readily adapted by the Christians and the obvious apotropaic meaning the images conveyed was fluently put to their own use. In their protective capacity, these christianized horsemen foreshadow the use of equestrian saints as guardians flanking doorways on the exterior of the church as well as in the interior, at the entrance to the sanctuary. At the same time, they prefigure the horsemen so widely represented in the medieval Arab repertory, enhancing the horse-riding culture.

In Coptic art, the horseman is painted and carved on walls, panels, icons, screens and illuminated manuscripts – although apparently not in any systematic fashion. Most of the time he is depicted as an equestrian hero defeating his adversary, as an apotropaic epitome of the eternal fight between Good and Evil. The saint on horseback is never rendered alone but is invariably represented together with at least one other mounted saint, often even forming part of a large group of heavenly cavalymen. Within the present framework, it is not our aim to examine all the extant examples of equestrian saints. We will rather discuss some illustrative cases in order to trace the different ways in which the artists made use of the saints' protective capacity and to determine what kind of different forms these figures could take in performing their prophylactic function. First we will present examples from the realm of wall painting, after which the equestrian saints figuring in wood carving will be discussed.

Painted equestrian saints

Painted saints on horseback are usually encountered on walls, generally in the nave. This is the case in

Deir al-Surian in Wadi Natrun¹³; Deir al-Malak Gabryal in Fayyum¹⁴; Deir Maymun (traces of an equestrian saint in the northern haykal, perhaps St Mercurius) and the Church of Abu Saifein in Old Cairo (St Mercurius has been preserved on the north wall of the upper gallery)¹⁵. All these paintings date before the thirteenth century. Depictions of equestrian saints can also be found in locations or on objects constituting the entrance or the gate itself, which leads into the sanctuary. In Coptic churches, the sanctuary is hidden from the worshippers' view. Access, which is restricted to the clergy, takes place through the central door of a screen which transverses the entire choir. Sometimes the entrance to the sanctuary is concealed still further: it is separated from the nave by an extra room called the khurus¹⁶. Apparently derived from the low sanctuary barrier, the khurus originated around the seventh century and is a typical Egyptian architectural feature. Its aesthetic purpose would have been to hide the sanctuary with more than just a low barrier, and, in the words of Peter Grossmann, to 'enrich the appearance of apsidal openings that in some churches appeared somewhat small'¹⁷. The khurus is all the more interesting here since the depictions at the basis of our study are located either on the walls of the khurus, or directly on the sanctuary screen. As for the interior of the sanctuary, it

⁹ Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. 17075; Clédat 1999, Photo 208.

¹⁰ London, British Museum, inv. no. 1267; Badawy 1978, 191, Fig. 3.149.

¹¹ The thorough study by Karl-Heinz Brune (1999) on the subject of the Coptic horseman, for instance, provides us with numerous examples of the holy rider on textiles. See also Strzygowski 1902, 1-11 (especially on St George); Immerzeel 2003a, 265-286.

¹² On the origin of the equestrian saints, see Immerzeel 2004a, 36-39; Walter 2000; *idem* 2003a, 9-38. These authors also emphasize the importance of imperial iconography on the development of the Christianized horseman.

¹³ Innemée/Van Rompay/Sobczynski 1999; Innemée/Van Rompay 2000.

¹⁴ Godlewski 1997, 88-97.

¹⁵ Grossmann 1982, 178, Pl. 58; Van Loon/Immerzeel 1998, 23-25, 38.

¹⁶ Grossmann 1982, 112-122; Van Loon 1999, 109-124; 'The khurus, according to Ibn Sabba, is the 'Holy Place' where the priests dwell in front of the 'Holy of Holies', fits into this symbolism and might be seen as Paradise, the place where the souls of the righteous await the Last Judgement (...). However, it does not receive special mention during the consecration service nor do the words used for it betray any symbolic meaning'.

¹⁷ Grossmann 1991, 212-213.

is often decorated with the Annunciation or the Sacrifice of Isaac on the triumphal arch, along with other scenes of communion and sacrifice¹⁸.

Paired equestrian saints can be encountered on either side of the khurus, on its side walls, thus framing the entrance to the sanctuary. Such is the case in the khurus of the main church of the Monastery of St Antony (Deir Anba Antonius) near the Red Sea, where St Mercurius (Pl. 1) and St George (Pl. 2) are depicted opposite one another. They are part of a large decoration programme executed in 1232/33, which has already been thoroughly described and interpreted by Paul van Moorsel and Elizabeth Bolman respectively¹⁹. On each side of St George are depicted scenes more or less directly related to the saint's martyrdom. The iconography is similar to that of a saint on horseback carved on a wooden panel (or icon), which Lucy-Anne Hunt has identified as St George (Pl. 3)²⁰. The latter forms part of a set of five such panels in the Church of SS Sergius and Bacchus (Abu Sarga) in Old Cairo, depicting three equestrian saints and two scenes from the New Testament²¹. The similarity of this panel's iconography and the painting in the Church of St Antony enables us to identify the equestrian saint of Abu Sarga as St George. Both images show the saint aiming his spear at a man crouched on the ground. In case of the painting, an added inscription identifies the crouching figure as Euchius, the soldier who, according to tradition, was sent by the Roman Emperor Diocletian to destroy the sanctuary of St George at Lydda. This sanctuary is represented as a small building on the right. Though defeated by George, the soldier is trying to reach the building with a stick, a symbolic attempt to destroy it. Although Hunt deciphers this as an iconography of submission²², we would consider it rather as common imagery used for equestrian saints defeating enemies. In our opinion, it exemplifies what may happen to those who offend Christianity.

On the opposite side of the khurus, St Mercurius is also surrounded by narrative details, although less extensive than for St George. Mercurius is depicted according to the traditional iconography, carrying a sword and a spear, with which he is wounding his enemy, who kneels on the ground. This means that when facing the sanctuary in the Church of St Antony, the beholder is framed by two military saints defeating enemies of God. Should it be considered as a warning from the soldiers of Christ to future enemies of Christianity who might attempt to reach the most sacred place of the church? And would this make the purpose of the saints' locations that of protecting the Gateway to Heaven? Given the apotropaic value of the equestrian saints, we can indeed consider that George and Mercurius are guarding the entrance to the sanctuary, each of them symmetrically occupying the very last space, or step, before one enters the Holy of Holies. The protective function of the equestrian saints is enhanced by the depiction of two archangels on the inside of the arch of the khurus (Pl. 4); archangels can also take on an apotropaic value when depicted next to sanctuaries, doors, or on medallions²³.

In the Church of the Archangel Gabriel, at Deir al-Malak Gabryal (or Naqlun) in Fayyum, the remains of a khurus have been preserved. A major apse and two lateral sacristies make up the haykal. A series of saintly figures, dated to 1022-1032, are painted on either side of the walls of the church, from the sacristies to the narthex²⁴. On the southern wall of the khurus, a saint on horseback is depicted next to the southern sanctuary²⁵. Few fragments are left of this equestrian saint, but they still allow us to discern the shape of a horseman, of whom one can see part of his torso and halo, and his horse's head (Pl. 5). The state of preservation does not allow the identification of the saint. He is not depicted alone, but is followed by three standing figures: St Simeon Stylite and two other unidentified saints. On the opposite wall of the khurus, no figure has survived that would be symmetrical with this equestrian saint. The northern wall, rather, forms an entrance to the northern annex of the church, which was cut through at a later period. The unidentified equestrian saint mentioned above thus currently the only one existing within the khurus: we do not know if the sanctuary was ever guarded by two horsemen, as was the case in the Church of St Antony, although this remains a possibility.

¹⁸ On this issue, see Van Loon 1999.

¹⁹ Bolman 2002; Van Moorsel 1995.

²⁰ Hunt 2000, 14.

²¹ Cramer 1964, 112, Fig. 128; Hunt 1998a, 303, Fig. 13, Hunt 2000, 18-20, Fig. 6.

²² Hunt 2000, 17-18.

²³ Schiemenz 1986, 40.

²⁴ Godlewski 1997, 93-97; *idem* 1999, 157-162.

²⁵ Godlewski 1997, 95, Fig. 4, MS. 1.



Pl. 1. Deir Anba Antonius near the Red Sea, north wall of the khurus: St Mercurius

Just as at St Antony's monastery, the equestrian saint is a rather important character within the Church of Gabriel, where several such depictions can be found on the walls of the nave and on the western wall, in the narthex. Moreover, just as in St Antony's monastery two archangels were painted below the arch of the khurus, here in Naqlun, archangels are depicted inside the lateral sacristies, framing the central apse²⁶. These symmetrical figures were added at a later period than the rest of the paintings, perhaps over older depictions of archangels. As in the khurus of St Antony, depicting archangels in such a location would seem to belong to a broader iconographical programme related to the protection of the sanctuary, including equestrian saints and archangels, the latter being considered military angels. Unfortunately, this assumption cannot be confirmed in the case of Naqlun, since no symmetrical equestrian saint to

the one painted on the southern wall of the khurus has survived. If one posits the existence of such a horseman, the sanctuary would then have been guarded by two warrior saints on horseback, and two archangels.

In Deir al-Shohada near Esna, two saints on horseback are painted symmetrically on the southern and northern walls of the khurus, facing the two sanctuaries in the northern annex of the main church²⁷. They are completed by a third equestrian saint painted on the piece of western wall, inside the khurus, that separates the latter from the nave

²⁶ Godlewski 1997, 93, Fig. 4, MZNS. 1, MZSN. 1.

²⁷ Leroy 1975, 14-16, Pls 39-41, 44-47, Figs 1.6-1.8: the date is given after an inscription next to Theodore, which can be read either as 1129-1130 or 1179-1180 (846 or 896, Year of the Martyrs).



Pl. 2. *Deir Anba Antonius near the Red Sea, south wall of the khurus: St George*

of the northern annex²⁸. The two saints framing the entrances to the sanctuaries are St Claudius (south; Pl. 6) and an unidentified saint (maybe George²⁹) with a short black beard (north); the third is St Theodore Stratelates. An inscription next to Theodore indicates a dating of either 1129/30 or 1179/80. Theodore, from his position, is obviously significant for the whole composition. If Claudius and the unidentified saint symmetrically frame the sanctuaries, the inclusion of Theodore within the composition then closes up the 'protective' semi-circle the three of them form in front of those sanctuaries³⁰. We can assume that the three saints on

horseback are guarding the Gate of Heaven and they can be given the same apotropaic meaning previously attributed to double depictions of similar saints.

A second instance of three saints on horseback, though positioned differently, is to be found in the khurus of Deir al-Surian in Wadi Natrun (Pl. 7; Fig. 1). They belong to the second layer of paintings in the church, which is assigned to the early eighth century³¹. The three saints do not frame the main haykal but the southern one, and cannot be incorporated into a larger composition, in which they would have been symmetrical to other equestrian saints on the northern part of the khurus. Two of the mounted saints, unidentified, are facing each other on the lower east wall, while the third, St Victor, is depicted alone on the lower southern wall, next to a doctor treating patients, whom Victor faces. This latter depiction also

²⁸ Grossmann 1982, 4-5.

²⁹ Van Loon/Immerzeel 1998, 41.

³⁰ Schiemenz 1986, 41-43.

³¹ Innemée/Van Rompay/Sobczynski 1999, §1/2.2.4-2.2.5, Ill. 6-7.



Pl. 3. Church of Abu Sarga, Old Cairo, wooden panel:
St George

belongs to the second layer of paintings, which suggests that Victor was never paired with another symmetrical equestrian saint. According to Karel Innemée, the southern and northern sanctuaries used to be pastoforia, i.e. side rooms, at the time of the construction of the church around the middle of the seventh century³². The entrance to the former northern pastoforion is decorated with a *crux gemmata* framed by two standing saints, with St James on the left³³. This iconographical programme is contemporary with the equestrian saints in the southern part of the khurus.

Innemée argues that the northern pastoforion was turned into a sanctuary dedicated to St James, and that the paintings were added to correlate to this new function³⁴. It is tempting to suggest that the three equestrian saints painted above and next to the small entrance to the southern haykal played a similar role. It should be noted, however, that the

present entrance was cut through the wall at a later period than when the paintings were executed, for their lower part is now lost. Similarly to the development of the northern pastoforion, a first rectangular entrance to the side-room was made at the corner. At an unknown period, this entrance was moved leftwards so that it would occur in the middle of the wall. At the present state of research, it is uncertain whether the paintings were added before or after the relocation of the first entrance. In case of the latter, it may indeed be argued that the purpose of the painted equestrian saints was to correlate with the new function of the pastoforion. They would then have guarded the entrance to the newly formed sanctuary. Yet another possibility is that the enlargement of the doorway coincided with the transformation of the pastoforion into a sanctuary, i.e. *after* the paintings of the equestrian saints were added. Therefore, further research is needed in order to establish the exact sequence of events.

At Deir al-Surian, two standing warrior saints, each holding a sword, are painted on the half-columns framing the entrance to the main sanctuary. They also belong to the second layer of paintings. Early tenth-century stuccoes cover some parts of the columns, showing that the stuccoes date from a later decoration than the standing saints³⁵. As columns are fitting architectural elements for standing figures, and as the present ones frame the entrance to the sanctuary, it is not surprising to find in such a location standing warrior saints, chosen for their well-known apotropaic value. In Deir al-Surian, the last three letters of the saint's name have been preserved on the right column (Pl. 8): these can be read as 'TIOC', suggesting that the saint could be identified as St Sergios³⁶. We may assume that the saint on the left column would be St Bacchus. A later Cappadocian example emphasizes the expansion of depictions of standing saints on columns at the entrance to the sanctuary: in the Church of the Ermitage at Zelve (eleventh century), SS George

³² Innemée 2004, 61. It should be borne in mind that archaeological surveys should be undertaken to confirm this assumption.

³³ Innemée 2004, 62-66, Pl. 2.

³⁴ Innemée 2004, 61-66.

³⁵ Immerzeel 2004c, 1305.

³⁶ Innemée 1998, §3.4, Fig. 2; Innemée/Van Rompay 1998, 172, Fig. 4.



Pl. 4. Deir Anba Antonius near the Red Sea, arch of the khurus: archangels



*Pl. 5. Church of the Archangel Gabriel, Deir al-Malak Gabryal, south wall of the nave:
anonymous equestrian saint, Simeon Stylites and standing saints*



Pl. 6. Deir al-Shobada, north wall of the khurus: St Claudius



Pl. 7. Deir al-Surian, east wall of the khurus: two anonymous equestrian saints and St Victor



Pl. 8. *Deir al-Surian, column framing the entrance to the sanctuary: St Sergius (Courtesy of K. Innemée)*

and Christopher are painted on the pillars of the eastern apse³⁷. Another variant can be observed at the Cathedral of St Mark in Venice, where seated figures of SS George and Demetrius are depicted at either side of the church's entrance. David Walsh agrees that we should ascribe to the sitting and standing warrior saints the same protective value as is attributed to the equestrian saints³⁸. Therefore, in Deir al-Surian the emphasis on warrior saints as guardians of the sanctuary occurs twice, with either mounted or standing warrior saints.

As a preliminary conclusion, it may be argued that the manner in which, and the location where, the equestrian saints are painted, taken with their apotropaic value, indeed suggest that they stand as guardians of the entrance to the sanctuary. In some cases they only have a general protective role, while in others they appear to convey an explicit warning to the enemies of God not to enter the most sacred space. It should be emphasized that in all cases, the warrior saints have not been placed in such locations by pure coincidence. Symmetrical compositions are often used for depicting equestrian saints, either painted above entrances or on either side, carved on stone-relief plaques, and so on. Oya Pancaroğlu considers the visual impact of these double depictions more important than the identification of the saints themselves, arguing that they enhance the message of the triumph of Good over Evil³⁹. However, the above Egyptian instances have shown that double depictions of equestrian saints are not systematical. The number of saints painted next to the sanctuary seems to be adapted to the architecture: they can be found on both sides of the khurus where two walls are available (St Antony), on three sides when there are three walls (Deir al-Shohada), or on one side of the khurus without symmetrical depictions on the other side (Deir al-Surian). Hence, the number of equestrian saints seems of minor importance: whether they are depicted in the sanctuary by twos or threes, they continue to bear the same protective value. This value is all the more strongly reinforced if the iconographical programme is completed by two archangels or two standing warrior saints.

Equestrian saints carved on sanctuary screens

Depictions of equestrian saints can also be found on sanctuary screens and wooden panels. Such a

³⁷ Jolivet-Lévy 1991, 13, Pl. 19, Fig. 2.

³⁸ Walsh 1982, 97.

³⁹ Pancaroğlu 2004, 154.



Pl. 9. Coptic Museum, Cairo, sanctuary screen from Sitt Barbara (Courtesy of CCMAA)

location is particularly fitting, since the screen precisely separates the sanctuary from the rest of the church and sets up its entrance. Thus we could expect that to the equestrian saints carved on sanctuary screens the same meaning is ascribed as to similar saints painted next to the haykal. Two screens, dating to the eleventh or twelfth century, include saints on horseback among their carved decoration. One of the two screens of the Church of St Mercurius in Old Cairo bears Christian horsemen, while the screen from the Church of Sitt Barbara is carved with a variation of the horseman pattern: a mounted falconer. To these two examples can be added three separate panels carved with distinctively Christian horsemen, which were mentioned above in the discussion of the wall painting of St George at the Monastery of St Antony. They are still preserved in the Church of Abu Sarga in Old Cairo, but were dismantled from their original location and reused on lateral sanctuary screens, along with other pan-

els depicting biblical scenes or pure ornamentation⁴⁰. Although no inscriptions mention their names, we can recognize Theodore and George (Pl. 3) on the basis of their facial features, while the third saint remains unidentified⁴¹. Scholars have argued that the three panels may have been part of a former screen or door, but at the present state of research this has to remain a hypothesis. Therefore, in the following discussion the focus will be only on the sanctuary screens from the Church of Sitt Barbara and the Church of St Mercurius respectively.

⁴⁰ Butler 1884, I, 181-203, Fig. 11; Cramer 1964, 112, Fig. 128; Hunt 1998a, 302-303, Figs 12-13; *idem* 2000, 18-20, Fig. 6.

⁴¹ G. Schiemenz (1986, 66) identifies them as SS George, Demetrius or Theodore, and Mercurius. The latter identification seems erroneous: we lack specific clues that would confirm this identity, since the figure does not bear any attribute of St Mercurius such as a sword.

The decoration of the sanctuary screen from the Church of Sitt Barbara (mid-eleventh century; Pl. 9), currently preserved in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, includes two mounted falcons (Pl. 10)⁴². They are framed within medallions and placed on the spandrels of the door, while two additional horsemen are carved in the two uppermost panels of the door. The four horsemen are all wearing turbans. Both pairs are turned towards one another. The other panels of the screen display affronted animals, lions attacking a prey, sitting musicians and foliages. The falconer seems an odd pattern to be carved on a Christian object as he does not bear any Christian attribute. A closer study of the context of the Fatimid era, in which we should re-situate the screen of Sitt Barbara, might help us to decipher the choice and purpose of such a pattern. On the screen, the falcons are not represented alone, but in conjunction with other scenes related to the pastimes of the royal court, mainly composed of hunting scenes and fights between lions and gazelles, and of lions against men. In such an Arabic repertoire, the figurative patterns are usually considered as epitomes of broader concepts: a hunter would stand for the hunt, a musician for music, a dancer for dance, and so on⁴³. Should we assume that the falconer, when carved on a screen, was only a pattern related to pastimes, an epitome of the hunt, or could it be considered as a variation of the Christian mounted saint, interpreted after the Fatimid fashion? This question also relates to a North-Mesopotamian portal that will be discussed below. In attempting to decipher the purpose of similar riders depicted on Italo-Byzantine bronze doors, Walsh considers them simple epitomes of the

secular world, related to the bourgeoisie's entertainment and, by extension, images of paradise⁴⁴. But the cases discussed by Walsh also include sacred and saintly figures, horsemen clearly identified as equestrian saints and some more pagan patterns, the whole being ordered in a hierarchical composition topped with a Deesis. The Christian origin of the bronze doors cannot be mistaken and here perhaps archers and fighting figures depicted in the lower (and last) registers, can indeed be ascribed a simple meaning. But the case of the screen of Sitt Barbara is more complex, since it does not show any explicit Christian images.

The origin of the screen at Sitt Barbara has been subject to discussion, because according to some scholars it looks too Islamic to be Coptic. Was it carved by Muslim or Coptic craftsmen? Who commissioned it to be carved this way? Bolman wonders whether it could have been placed somewhere else before it ended up in a church, meaning that it could have been re-used in Sitt Barbara but not necessarily designed for a church⁴⁵. This is indeed a valid question. However, considering that we lack any example of a screen from either an Islamic or secular origin, and that this object is obviously shaped like a typical iconostasis (only lacking the usual windows), we may assume that it was originally meant to be a sanctuary screen, designed for a Christian place of worship⁴⁶. As far as its execution is concerned, it has often been suggested that the screen was made by Muslim wood-carvers, which would easily explain the distinct conformity with woodwork from the secular Islamic context. The issue regarding the religious identity of the craftsmen does not seem to be of the greatest importance, however, given that Copts and Muslims partly shared the same iconographic repertoire and workshops. The identity of the commissioner and his social background, on the other hand, is undoubtedly the key to understanding the context that led to the creation of such a screen, especially since he can be expected to be the one who would have selected the scenes which were carved onto the screen. It seems rather unlikely that it would have been a gift from a Muslim to Christians, even if the communities were getting along particularly well under the Fatimids. The Muslim donor would have had to be surprisingly well aware of the liturgical practices of the Christians, which is doubtful, to say the least. It would be more appropriate to assume that it was commissioned by a wealthy Christian

⁴² Cairo, the Coptic Museum, inv. no. 778: Butler 1884, I, 235-247; Hunt 1998b, 326-329, Fig. 3; Lamm 1936, 64-68, Pls II a-b; Monneret de Villard/Patricolo 1922, 52-54, Figs 41-42; Pauty 1930, 13-25, Pls I-XVI.

⁴³ Grabar 1974, 175-182.

⁴⁴ Walsh 1982, 98-102, Figs 1, 7-9.

⁴⁵ We would like to thank Elizabeth Bolman of Temple University for providing us with an advance copy of her forthcoming article for *DOP* ('Veiling Sanctity in Christian Egypt: Visual and Spatial Solutions'), in which she raises the above mentioned question.

⁴⁶ Coptic iconostases showing this same typical model and dating to the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries can still be found in the churches of Al-Mu'allāqa, Abu Sarga, Sitt Barbara, Abu Saifein and Haret Zuweyla.



Pl. 10. Coptic Museum, Cairo, detail of sanctuary screen from Sitt Barbara: falconer (After Pauty 1930, Pl. 14)



Pl. 11. Coptic Museum, Cairo, detail of sanctuary screen from Sitt Barbara: two musicians

who wanted the screen to follow the contemporary Fatimid 'fashion'⁴⁷.

This suggestion finds support from the fact that other sanctuary screens which also date before the end of the twelfth century, but for which the Christian origin has never been disputed, also match the Fatimid standards. This applies to the massive sanctuary doors preserved in the monasteries of Deir Anba Bishoy, Deir al-Baramus and the similar (though dismantled) door of Deir Abu Maqar⁴⁸. These feature only ornamental patterns and do not bear any apparent Christian attribute

such as a cross: their decoration shows a distinct analogy with the carvings seen on contemporary minbars and Islamic doors, e.g. doors of the Western Palace, of the Mosques of al-Azhar, of al-Aqmar, and so on⁴⁹. Although the screen of Sitt Barbara is carved with popular patterns taken from the Arabic repertoire, it should be noted that those patterns seem to have been carefully chosen to match the object's purpose. Nowhere on the screen does one find any figures drinking wine from a cup, nor are there any dancers or seated princes. The screen's decoration comprises only hunting scenes and fights between animals and men, with the exception of a single panel carved with two musicians, one playing a lute and the other a tambourine (Pl. 11). Another point of interest is that the isolated horsemen or falconers on horseback are only located on and above the sanctuary's entrance door. Here again, this particular disposition must result from a deliberate choice. Therefore, these patterns selected from a broader repertoire, in addition to the shape of the object itself, would favour the hypothesis of a genuine sanctuary screen commissioned by a Christian. This hypothesis remains fragile, however, as we will note later that the Royal Gate in the Church of Mar Ahudemmeh in Mosul also includes two seated

⁴⁷ Oleg Grabar (1974, 185) points out the existence of a middle-class '*urban bourgeoisie*' composed of Muslim, Christian and Jewish tradesmen and craftsmen, '*who had the economic means to acquire or to order for themselves objects with new or sophisticated themes*'. Indeed those '*nouveaux riches*' imitated the rulers' artistic tastes, while they simultaneously were concerned with other themes related to everyday life. Cf. Baer 1999, 385-394; Shoshan 1991, 76-77.

⁴⁸ Deir Anba Bishoy: Evelyn White 1933, 153-154, Pls XLVII a-b; Lamm 1936, 69-70. Deir al-Baramus: Evelyn White 1933, 239, Pls LXXXVI a-b; Lamm 1936, 70. Deir Abu Maqar: Evelyn White 1933, 101-102, Pl. XXVII a; Lamm 1936, 70.

⁴⁹ Lamm 1936, 68-69, Pl. III (al-Azhar), 70, 80, Pl. X c (al-Aqmar).

figures holding a beaker placed between a pair of mounted falconers.

The falconer and the horseman, which can be assimilated to the same pattern, are very popular within the broad medieval Arabic and Byzantine iconographic repertoire. For instance, we find falconers on a large number of ceramic wares, wooden friezes (e.g. from the Western Palace in Cairo), ivory pieces, and metalwork. Another interesting assimilation of the falconer to an ecclesiastical context can be observed on the Pala d'Oro in the Cathedral of St Mark in Venice: three of its enamelled medallions, dating from the eleventh century, feature falconers⁵⁰. André Grabar mentions that those medallions were reused, probably from a secular object of imperial origin depicting royal pastimes. In the Christian context, the equestrian images of the medallions have been retained. In the Byzantine area, mounted saints depicted at the entrance of a church or a sanctuary seem to be a trend as popular as in oriental churches. The wooden entrance door of the Church of St Nicholas at Ochrid in Macedonia (thirteenth to fourteenth century) confirms such a statement: its carved decoration comprises panels depicting six symmetrical equestrian saints, as well as a centaur playing the flute and a horseman (non-haloed) in the lower register, and animals surrounding the central saints on horseback⁵¹. Therefore, taking into account the painted equestrian saints we described in earlier paragraphs, whose location in front of the sanctuary was obviously not insignificant, we may interpret the pattern of the falconer carved on a door of a sanctuary screen as a representation, in the Fatimid fashion, of a saint on horseback, protecting or guarding the entrance to the sanctuary.

The screen of the Church of St Mercurius (twelfth century) introduces another way in which equestrian saints can be displayed (Pl. 12)⁵². Four panels are carved with mounted saints, undoubtedly Christians and depicted according to the traditional iconography with a halo and carrying either a spear or a cross. One of the four saints is wounding a man, who kneels on the ground (Pl. 13). This horseman is actually the only one who looks like a warrior saint: the others look more like simple mounted saints (Pl. 14), such as those encountered in the paintings of Bawit in Chapels LI and LVI⁵³. These riders bear long sticks ending in a cross and are not depicted defeating an enemy. One of the panels is the result of a modern restoration. Two of the four

panels symmetrically frame the lintel, above the door of the screen, while the two others are set at the opposite ends of this same row of panels⁵⁴. The lintel they frame is a re-use of a former wooden frieze, showing two half-cut symmetrical reclined sphinxes⁵⁵. A saint on horseback is placed next to each sphinx. The saint on the left is the result of a modern restoration. Therefore the entrance to the sanctuary is framed by four figures: two saints on horseback and two sphinxes. Should we attribute to the mounted saints the same apotropaic meaning ascribed to warrior saints? It is surprising to find that the only real warrior saint of the four is not even placed above the entrance door. Thus it seems that those riders, without any arms or armour, should be considered generic representations of equestrian saints, bearing the same protective meaning as long as they were placed above the entrance to the sanctuary. This combination of mounted figures is at least evidence of the widespread habit of depicting horsemen at the entrance to the sanctuaries.

Finally, it should be noted that the depiction of equestrian saints directly on the Gate of Heaven is far from being a solely Egyptian characteristic⁵⁶. Earlier and later instances of templon screens or entryways painted or carved with equestrian saints can be found in Georgia, Armenia and Cappadocia, dating from the sixth to the twelfth centuries.

⁵⁰ Grabar 1951, 48-49, Figs 10 a-c and 11 a-c.

⁵¹ Bréhier 1973, Pl. XLIII; Walsh 1982, 98, Fig. 7.

⁵² Butler 1884, I, 123-124; Pauty 1930, 27-35, Pls XVII-XXXIII; Hunt 1998a, 301, Fig. 11 (erroneously stating that it is in the Coptic Museum).

⁵³ These mounted saints are not dressed like warriors, although they wear short tunics. The paintings of Bawit are reproduced in Clédat 1999, Figs 102, 139.

⁵⁴ Both of them are facing the same way. This rather illogical setting might result from a mistake during the restoration of the screen around the mid-twentieth century, as it was presumably dismantled in order to complete all the missing panels. The screen is reproduced in E. Pauty's publication of 1930 in its pre-restoration state, which shows the high number of missing panels that will later be completed.

⁵⁵ This is suggested by the fact that a third of its width has been cut out, removing half the body of the two sphinxes symmetrically carved in the frieze's endings, and the lower part of the geometrical designs forming the background of the frieze. Such a background, shaping the medallions in which the figures are included, is very common among eleventh-century friezes, as evidenced by the many instances from the Fatimid Western Palace. However, it is rather unlikely that the frieze itself came from the Palace.

⁵⁶ Thierry 1999, 233-247.



Pl. 12. Church of Abu Saifein, Old Cairo, sanctuary screen

One good example, probably dating from the ninth century, is the chancel barrier of Derin Dere Kilisesi near Ürgüp: its two painted slabs show St George on horseback defeating a dragon, and St Theodore (?) depicted similarly⁵⁷. The same saints are shown affronting one another, facing a dragon with two heads, on a wall painting above the vestibule door of a funerary chapel in Yılanı

kilise near Ihlara, dating from the tenth century⁵⁸. Mixing up the screens of Sitt Barbara and Abu Saifein, Walsh compares the latter to Georgian chancel barriers from the eleventh or twelfth centuries, especially the one from Satkhe⁵⁹. Placing equestrian saints at entrances is also common in Italy, on monumental bronze doors⁶⁰. Tracing back the iconographical sources of the bronze doors made by Barisanus of Trani in Italy and Sicily, Walsh mentions several Georgian, Armenian and even Russian parallels depicting mounted figures on the exterior of churches, the tympani of the doorways of churches, pointing out that the popularity of equestrian saints and their protective purpose is especially an Eastern Christian feature⁶¹. Two examples from North Mesopotamia will be dealt with below. In conclusion, the roots of the Coptic equestrian saint depicted at the entrance to a sanctuary may be sought in Byzantine apotropaic representations, as well as in the popularity of the

⁵⁷ Jolivet-Lévy 1991, 190, Pl. 117. The author compares the chancel barrier of Derin dere kilisesi to the Georgian templon of Tsebelda (sixth-seventh centuries) and to the Armenian paintings of Lematavank (seventh century), pointing out the Early Christian origin of such depictions.

⁵⁸ Thierry 1999, 234-238, Fig. 1; Pancaroğlu 2004, Fig. 4 (after Thierry 1999).

⁵⁹ Walsh 1982, 98. Cf. Volbach/Lafontaine-Dosogne 1968, no. 357 (with Pl.).

⁶⁰ Frazer 1973, 145-162.

⁶¹ Walsh 1982, 96-97. For the parallel from Kiev, see Catalogue New York 1997, no. 196.



Pl. 13. Church of Abu Safein, Old Cairo, detail from sanctuary screen



Pl. 14. Church of Abu Safein, Old Cairo, detail from sanctuary screen: sphinx and mounted saint

horseman motif in the Eastern churches and the Islamic repertoire. Although the pattern itself is not of Egyptian origin, it seems that its expanding popularity in the Middle Ages was spread from Christian Egypt.

EQUESTRIAN SAINTS IN NORTH MESOPOTAMIA

The symmetrical depiction of horsemen facing one other is also found in connection with the entrance to the sanctuary in North Mesopotamia, more specifically in the area of Mosul, where two stone sanctuary portals have been preserved, both dating from around the mid-thirteenth century and belonging to churches from the Syrian Orthodox denomination. One (Monastery of Mar Behnam) is carved with clearly identifiable mounted saints, each holding a lance and defeating either a demon or a dragon, while the second portal (Church of Mar Ahudemme) shows the same ambiguity as noted before in the case of the sanctuary screen in the Church of Sitt Barbara, Cairo, since it is also carved with two mounted falconers. As a comparable parallel, one might refer to two stone slabs carved in low relief with equestrian saints (twelfth or thirteenth century), that were reused on the eighteenth-century iconostasis in the Old Tahira (the Virgin) Church in Mosul⁶². The iconostasis is currently located between two pilasters on the south side of the nave. It may be argued that the slabs may originally have been part of a construction giving access to the sanctuary, but at present this has to remain a hypothesis. In the following discussion the focus will therefore only be on the paired horsemen in Deir Mar Behnam and the Church of Mar Ahudemme, as they are still part of their original construction. However, before turning to these

examples, a few short preliminary remarks should be made about the architecture of churches from the Mosul area in comparison with examples from Syria and Lebanon, in the latter cases especially with a view to identifying the specific iconographic themes that were painted at the location marking the transition between nave and sanctuary.

Iconography marking the entrance to the sanctuary in Lebanon and Syria

Since an analysis of North-Mesopotamian church architecture in general, and the specifics of the churches of the Mosul area is beyond the scope of the present study, only some brief comments will be made, focusing on recent scholarly developments within this field of research⁶³. Scholars currently working on Syrian architecture have drawn attention to the variations which can be encountered in the architectural arrangement of both the East (Assyrian/Nestorian) and West Syrian (Syrian Orthodox) churches⁶⁴. Another important point they emphasize is that regional differences should be taken into account when dealing with a certain religious denomination. Although we accept the importance of differentiating between religious denominations and geographical areas, it appears that there was at least one important feature shared by all the churches of the Mosul area, whether East or West Syrian: a wall separating the nave from the sanctuary. Often it is pierced by three entrances, of which the central one (the Royal Gate) is the largest and most lavishly decorated. This omnipresence has probably lead Amir Harrak to characterize this architectural feature as an essential part of the architecture of the Syrian church⁶⁵.

In the literature devoted to the ancient churches of Tur 'Abdin, the origin and development of the east wall has often been connected with changes in liturgical practices. Generally, these churches are distinguished into two different groups according to their ground plan: churches with a transverse nave (i.e. with the greatest length from north to south) and a wall between the nave and the sanctuary (monastic churches), and those with a longitudinal nave and an open sanctuary (parish churches). The difference between the two arrangements is usually explained as resulting from liturgical practices, the performance of the Eucharistic liturgy being more important in parish churches⁶⁶. Andrew Palmer has rightly remarked, however, that the occurrence of

⁶² Fiey 1959, 138-140, Figs 8-9 (St George and Mar Behnam?); Leroy 1964, 66-67; Sarre/Herzfeld 1911-1920, III, 295-297, Pls CIII (plan), CIV-CV.

⁶³ For a general introduction to the churches of Mesopotamia, see Monneret de Villard 1940. The standard reference work to the churches of Mosul is still Fiey 1959. Cf. Habbi 1980.

⁶⁴ Marica Cassis (2002), especially, while focusing on the use of the bema in East Syriac churches, has emphasized the variations that exist between East and West Syrian churches and the use of certain liturgical furnishings.

⁶⁵ Harrak 2001, 16, writing on the monastic Church of Al-Chenisa (West Syrian) in Takrit.

⁶⁶ Bell/Mundell Mango 1982, vii-xi. Cf. Palmer 1990, 135-137, with further references.

the dividing wall might not always be liturgically significant, as practical considerations also played an important role in its usage. He points out that the east wall is a necessary structural feature where one has a transversal barrel-vault covering the nave⁶⁷. Besides, the distinction does not seem to have been so clear-cut in case of the churches in the Mosul area, given that typical 'monastic plans' are encountered in parish churches, and vice versa⁶⁸. Moreover, the 'closed sanctuary' is not restricted to any particular type of church. Both the monastic church of Mar Behnam and the village church of Mar Ahudemme, for instance, are provided with a wall dividing the nave from the sanctuary⁶⁹.

Most of the sanctuaries in Lebanon and Syria in which medieval wall paintings have been preserved, comprising small village churches, monastic chapels and caves, are located in remote mountainous areas. In accordance with their function as mere parish churches or serving minor monastic communities, they are all comparatively small in size⁷⁰. Although some of the churches seem to have been built on the remains of foundations from the Early Christian period, their elevation was usually renovated and altered in the subsequent centuries, often hampering a precise dating of these buildings. In contrast to our examples from the Mosul area, the eastern section of these churches is never closed off by a straight transversal wall pierced with a central doorway giving access to the sanctuary; hence they lack the characteristic Royal Gate. Nevertheless, in one instance liturgical furnishing has been found suggesting that the sanctuary may sometimes have been separated from the nave⁷¹. In the Chapel of Mar Musa al-Habashi, Syria, a stone base from an iconostasis was erected in front of the altar, decorated with the Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins, to the left and right of the entrance to the altar area, respectively⁷². Whereas the purpose of paired equestrian saints framing an entrance is mainly apotropaic, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins at Mar Musa conveys several layers of meaning and relates to other paintings in the church. Together with a set of murals in the apse, nave, and on the west wall of the chapel, the iconostasis painting belongs to an extensive and coherent decoration programme which was created by a Syrian artist named Rabban Sarkis (Sergius) around the year 1200 (layer 3)⁷³.

Explaining the meaning and purpose of the disposition of the figures, the parable of the Wise and

Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) refers to the open and closed doors of the wedding feast, i.e. the Eucharistic liturgy, pointing out that Christ is the door through which the faithful enter sacred space (John 10:9)⁷⁴. Besides the Eucharistic connotations of the theme, the wise and foolish virgins, approaching the entrance to the sanctuary from both sides, appropriately highlight its symbolism as the Gate of Heaven. In addition, the parable is often read as a warning to be prepared for the Second Coming. Accordingly, the monks passing through the iconostasis would be directly confronted with the Deesis, the enthroned Christ between the Virgin and St John the Baptist⁷⁵. We would also like to propose that the wise and foolish virgins were intentionally

⁶⁷ Palmer 1990, 136.

⁶⁸ Fiey 1959, 90-91.

⁶⁹ Ground plan of the Church of Mar Ahudemme: Fiey 1959, Pl. IX; ground plan of the church at Deir Mar Behnam: Preusser 1911, Pl. 2; Monneret de Villard 1940, Fig. 85. On the building history of Deir Mar Behnam, see Fiey 1965, 579-609.

⁷⁰ The plan of these churches is simple, and may be divided into two general groups. The first group consists of single nave churches with a protruding semi-circular apse, occasionally flanked by small rooms or recesses (prothesis and diaconicon), while the second group is characterized by a church plan with a double nave and two apses. Both types are sometimes provided with additional side aisles. Erica Cruikshank Dodd (2004, 21-28; *idem* 2001a, 5) has already remarked on the conventional character of these churches, pointing out that both types continue the architectural tradition which was already developed in the fifth and sixth centuries. No extensive study on the architecture of these painted churches has yet been published. Ground plans of the Lebanese churches can be found in the catalogue section in Cruikshank Dodd 2004.

⁷¹ At present, archaeological evidence testifying to the presence of chancel screens or iconostases dating from the Medieval period appears to be lacking in other painted churches in Lebanon and Syria. The stone iconostases in the Church of Mar Mtanios in Deddé (Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 391, Fig. 24.1) and in the Chapel of the Prophet Elijah in Ma'arrat Saydnaya (Immerzeel 2005a, 159, Pl. 17b) are more recent additions.

⁷² Cruikshank Dodd 2001a, 69-70, Pls 53a-b.

⁷³ Schmidt/Westphalen 2005, 120 n. 131, Pl. VIIIb.

⁷⁴ This idea is explicitly conveyed in a rendering of the parable in a Copto-Arabic New Testament, which was produced in Cairo in 1249/1250 (Institut Catholique, Bibliothèque de Fels, Paris, MS copte-arabe 1, fol. 19r). Here the scene is set within a two-storey building, with the foolish virgins standing below in front of the closed door, while the wise virgins and Christ are upstairs (Bolman 2002, 123, Fig. 7.35; Cramer 1964, 111, Fig. 123; Leroy 1974, 157-174, Pl. 10).

⁷⁵ Cruikshank Dodd 2001a, 41-42, Pls 8b, 15-16.

chosen to complement the large representation of the Last Judgement painted directly opposite, covering the entire west wall⁷⁶. The two paintings are not only linked symbolically, but also visually. The Last Judgement is divided into five horizontal registers, the top one being occupied by St Peter and St Paul on either side of a window. Below this window, the vertical axis down the middle of the wall contains, successively: the Hetoimasias as a symbol of the Second Coming, Adam and Eve as intercessors, the archangels Michael and Gabriel blowing their trumpets for the souls to rise up from the graves, and finally, at the bottom, the Weighing of the Souls. Scenes of Heaven and Hell are correspondingly allocated to the left and right of this central axis.

Even though the general composition of the Last Judgement is in accordance with contemporary Byzantine examples of the scene (e.g. Basilica of Torcello, late eleventh century⁷⁷), certain iconographic details were popular patterns in art of the countries East of the Byzantine Empire. In particular the presence of the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Paradise, carrying the souls of the blessed on their laps, attests to influence from the Eastern Christian tradition⁷⁸. On the other hand, scholars have emphasized that the image of the three fathers with souls on their laps found its way

into Byzantine and western iconography from the twelfth century onwards, probably under the direct influence of the crusaders. It may therefore be significant that the wise and foolish virgins can be found as part of Last Judgement compositions in the West, also from the twelfth century onwards⁷⁹. An Armenian example of such incorporation can be found in a rendering of the Last Judgement in a gospel book made in Cilicia in 1262, although in this case only the foolish virgins are shown, represented as a group of veiled women standing in front of a closed door⁸⁰. At Mar Musa, the connection between both scenes is ingeniously created by means of a visual cross-reference, for the binary left-right division of the Last Judgement is repeated on the west face of the iconostasis in the form of the wise and foolish virgins, who indeed may be recognized as symbols of the saved and damned⁸¹.

Returning to our general discussion, in most churches in Lebanon and Syria the east wall proper lacks extensive narrative imagery, simply because there is not enough space available, while in some churches the decoration is confined to the triumphal arch over the sanctuary. These triumphal arches all convey similar iconography consisting of scenes that were mainly chosen for their Eucharistic connotations, as they are closely related to the liturgical function of the altar area. The best-preserved example is in the Church of Mar Tadros in Bahdeidat, Lebanon, where both the angel and the Virgin of the Annunciation, and the Sacrifice of Isaac, and Moses receiving the tablets of the Law are juxtaposed on its spandrels (ca 1250-1270)⁸². It was mentioned above that the Sacrifice of Isaac in particular was popular in Egypt, where, similarly in relation to the sanctuary, it is combined with other Old Testament scenes with distinct liturgical connotations. The piers of the triumphal arches in Lebanon and Syria are consistently provided with figures of single standing saints. Undoubtedly the systematic use of such figures on piers and columns is due to the fact that, because of their intrinsic composition, they fitted neatly on these architectural features. Such locations directly framing the sanctuary would thus have been perfect for depictions of individual standing warrior saints. Indeed, we have already seen that their suitability was recognized in Deir al-Surian, where two standing warrior saints (eighth century; Pl. 8) are painted on the half-columns directly framing the entrance to the central khurus. This particular disposition is encountered in Cappadocia as well (see above)⁸³. A

⁷⁶ Cruikshank Dodd 2001a, 77-98, Pls II, 64.

⁷⁷ Catalogue New York 1997, Pl. on 437.

⁷⁸ For the three patriarchs with souls on their laps, see Cruikshank Dodd 2000; *idem* 2001a, 94-90, Pls XVI, 69a; Van Loon 2003.

⁷⁹ Especially on sculptured portals in France and Germany. Cf. Der Nersessian 1973, 20; Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 46 n. 142.

⁸⁰ Folda 2005, 438-439; Der Nersessian 1973, 19-21, Pl. 56; Walters Art Museum, MS W. 539, fol. 109v.

⁸¹ Although Cruikshank Dodd (2001a, 78) has pointed out the close relationship between the different scenes depicted in the church, she does not seem to have noticed the visual and iconographic association between the Last Judgement on the west wall and the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins on the iconostasis.

⁸² Cruikshank Dodd 2001b, 62-63, Figs 5-6, 8-11; Schmidt/Westphalen 2005, 111-112, Fig. 31. Similar designs can be found on the triumphal arches at Deir Mar Musa al-Habashi (Cruikshank Dodd 2001a, 31-40, Pls V-VI, 9a-b), the Chapel of Deir Mar Yaquub in Qara (Schmidt/Westphalen 2005, 111-116, cat. nos 20-21, Pls IIb, 11d-e), and perhaps in the Church of Mar Girgis in Rashkida (Immerzeel 2004b, 20).

⁸³ Although mounted warrior saints were far more popular, the standing variant was also known in Lebanon and Syria. This ancient variant is represented, for instance, in a Syriac

similar usage can also be found in the Church of SS Sergius and Bacchus near the Monastery of Our Lady in Kaftun, Lebanon, where a Polish-Lebanese restoration team has recently uncovered thirteenth-century wall paintings, including two pairs of standing warrior saints⁸⁴. They are displayed opposite one another on the piers of the first two arches in the nave leading up to the sanctuary, first St George paired with St Theodore on the opposite side of the nave, followed by SS Sergius and Bacchus. On passing through the west doorway from the narthex into the nave, visitors to the church would thus be directly confronted with the four soldier saints. Their placement adjacent to the entrance suggests that they had an apotropaic role, guarding the church from evil.

To conclude, the disposition of the churches in Lebanon and Syria that have retained their medieval wall paintings stands in a long architectural tradition, dating back to the Early Christian period. The same holds true for the churches from the Mosul area, but whereas the former are usually not equipped with an additional transition zone separating the nave from the sanctuary, the latter are commonly provided with a straight east wall pierced with a Royal Gate. In Lebanon and Syria, the location actually materializing the transitional stage between nave and sanctuary often coincides with the triumphal arch, which is invariably decorated with scenes referring to the liturgical function of the altar area. It may therefore be argued that the designers responsible for the decoration programmes opted for certain scenes with specific theological value, instead of choosing themes that were known for their protective capacities. It should be emphasized, however, that the choice of particular themes cannot be dissociated from the amount of space available, i.e. the existing architecture, including any additional furnishings (e.g. a chancel barrier or an iconostasis). We have already pointed out that individual standing saints were extremely appropriate for depiction on piers and columns, because of their common composition. Another striking example of this mechanism is the juxtaposition of the Sacrifice of Isaac, and Moses receiving the tablets of the Law, as represented on several triumphal arches. Apart from their symbolic content, they are obviously chosen because of their intrinsic structure. In both scenes, the Hand of God reaching down from Heaven constitutes a suitable iconographic detail that

could fill up the space at the apex⁸⁵. Although in the present study we will have to limit ourselves to these two examples, it appears that some scenes and figures were more suitable than others for positioning at certain locations, and not only because of their iconology.

In Lebanon and Syria, the space-consuming image of the equestrian saint was apparently not depicted directly adjacent to the sanctuary simply because there was not enough room available. In the exceptional case where there was perhaps enough space on the east wall, as in the Church of Mar Elian in Homs (see the introduction), the artists did not hesitate to grasp the opportunity and represent a pair of equestrian saints, one on either side of the apse. In the other churches, the mounted saints are usually relegated to the side walls of the nave, sometimes to the west wall⁸⁶. It should be

Gospel book from 1054 in the Library of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate at Damascus (MS 12/8, fol. 351r; Leroy 1964, 226, 232, Pl. 53.1), on a column in the Church of St John the Baptist in Saydnaya (late twelfth century to ca 1260; Immerzeel 2004a, 35), in the Chapel of the Prophet Elijah in Ma'arrat Saydnaya (Immerzeel 2005a, 161, 171-172, Pls 17b, 18b), the Church of Saydet in Qusba (thirteenth century; Immerzeel 2004b, 10), the Cave Church of Saydet Durr in Hadchit (twelfth/thirteenth century; Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 77-78, 240, Pls 11.6, 11.8-11.9), and on two columns in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (1143-1169; Kühnel 1988, 72-78, Pls XXII-XXIII, XIV/38).

⁸⁴ Personal communication from Mat Immerzeel. The present restoration activities are organized by Tomasz Waliszewski and Krzysztof Chmielewski (Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology of Warsaw University and Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw) and the Lebanese Direction General of Antiquities.

⁸⁵ The Sacrifice of Isaac, and Moses receiving the tablets of the Law were already juxtaposed on Early Christian sarcophagi from Rome and on ivories: Schmidt/Westphalen 2005, 112-116. Stephan Westphalen has argued that the coupling of the Sacrifice of Isaac, and Moses receiving the Tablets of the Law was probably not a Medieval reinvention, but should rather be traced back to a now lost intermediate model. Immerzeel (2003b, 48, Figs 1, 4) has pointed out a similar use of both scenes on fourth-century Roman sarcophagi, on which they 'often flanked *clipei* because the divine hand reaching out of heaven in both scenes could perfectly fill the corners at the top of circular frames'. This practical use is encountered, for instance, on the so-called *Brothers Sarcophagus* in the Museo Pio Cristiano, Vatican City, dating from the mid-fourth century.

⁸⁶ For instance, in the Church of Mar Mtanios in Deddé (thirteenth century; Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 391, Figs 24.1a-b, Pls XCI-XCII, 24.2; Immerzeel 2004a, no. 2); St George (?) killing a soldier in the lunette above the western

emphasized, however, that in a few instances the equestrian saints are painted at the east end of the nave, directly in front of the sanctuary. This is the case, for instance, in the Church of Mar Tadros in Bahdeidat (ca 1250-1270), where St Theodore is featured killing a snakelike dragon with a human head on the north wall, while St George is depicted on the opposite side, rescuing the slave from Mitilene⁸⁷. Considering their placement in this prominent position, in close proximity of the altar area, it would be erroneous not to regard them as sanctuary guardians.

Equestrian saints at Deir Mar Behnam

As mentioned, paired equestrian saints have been preserved on the Royal Gate (ca 1233-1259) in the church at the Monastery of Mar Behnam, which is located approximately 35 km southeast of Mosul (Fig. 1)⁸⁸. The lintel of the Royal Gate is decorated with two confronted equestrian saints (Pl. 15), flanking a sculpture in high relief. Due to severe damage it cannot be established what the central relief originally represented; it may have been a representation of a lion and its prey⁸⁹, or perhaps even a depiction of the enthroned Virgin and Child⁹⁰. The mounted saint depicted at the left spears a prostrate figure, probably representing a demon, whose entire body is encircled by a snakelike dragon (Pl. 16). In front of the saint, an angel approaches from the top right-hand corner, holding a scroll in his left hand. The rider on the right kills a knotted dragon with a spear surmounted by a cross. These equestrian saints have generally been identified with Mar Behnam and St George respectively⁹¹, but Piotr Scholz has recently interpreted them as SS Theodore and Sergius⁹². A closer study of the compositional predecessors and the development of this scene may shed some more light on this matter, thereby taking into account the particular context in which the scene is placed – a church dedicated to Mar Behnam.

The composition and iconography of the two confronted equestrian saints on the Royal Gate at Deir Mar Behnam is comparable with certain images of St George together with St Theodore, in which the former kills a human being and the latter transfixes a dragon. It should be emphasized that in the East the traditional dragon-slayer is St Theodore, while the common adversary of St George is a man, usually portrayed in military dress and wearing a crown. This royal figure has generally been identified with George's persecutor, the Roman Emperor Diocletian (284-305), who is known from the saint's hagiography⁹³. The oldest securely dated and named example of the juxtaposition of these two scenes is seen in the reliefs on the façade of the Church of the Holy Cross on Aght'amar in Lake Van (915-921), present East Turkey⁹⁴. This pairing must have been widespread, as it is depicted on the side panels of a triptych in the Monastery of St Catherine at Sinai, which, according to Lucy-Anne Hunt, may have been painted by thirteenth-century Coptic artists⁹⁵. The portrayal of St George and St Theodore, each with

entrance, Chapel of Deir Saydet Hammatur in Qusba (thirteenth century; Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 210, Fig. 6.1 E, Pls 6.17-6.18; Immerzeel 2004a, no. 5; *idem* 2006); in the Cave Church of Saydet-Naia in Kfar Schleiman (thirteenth century; Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 308, Fig. 17.1 D, Pl. 17.7; Immerzeel 2004a, no. 10).

⁸⁷ Cruikshank Dodd 2001b, 64-65, Figs 21, 23-26; *idem* 2004, 70, 72, 342-344, Figs 19.1-19.2, Pls LXXXV-LXXXVI, 19.33-19.40; Immerzeel 2004a, no. 12, 43-45, Pls 14, 16. A similar disposition is also encountered in the Church of Mar Mtanios (thirteenth century) in Deddé, where fragments of an equestrian saint are found on the eastern part of the north wall (Cruikshank Dodd 2004, 391, Fig. 24.1 D, Pls 24.3, XCIII; Immerzeel 2004a, no. 2), and in the Chapel of Deir Mar Yaqub in Qara, where a fragment of a horseman (layer 2; ca 1200-1250) has been preserved on the south wall in the naos, directly in front of the sanctuary (Schmidt/Westphalen 2005, no. 22, 116-120, Fig. 33, Pl. IVb).

⁸⁸ A short bibliography on Deir Mar Behnam should include the following: Balicka-Witakowski *et al.* 2001, 215-216, Pls on 139-140; Fiey 1965, 565-609, Pl. E; *idem* 1970; Gierlich 1996, no. 75, 235-238, Pl. 59; Harrak/Ruji 2004, 66-72, Figs 1-4; Leroy 1958, 233-243, Figs 53-55; Preusser 1911, 3-13, Pls 1-20, Fig. 2; Zibawi 2005, 345-346, Figs 4-8. For a more detailed description of the Royal Gate, see Snelders 2006.

⁸⁹ Leroy 1958, 240; Fiey 1965, 600, 601 n. 5.

⁹⁰ Scholz 1994-1995, 317.

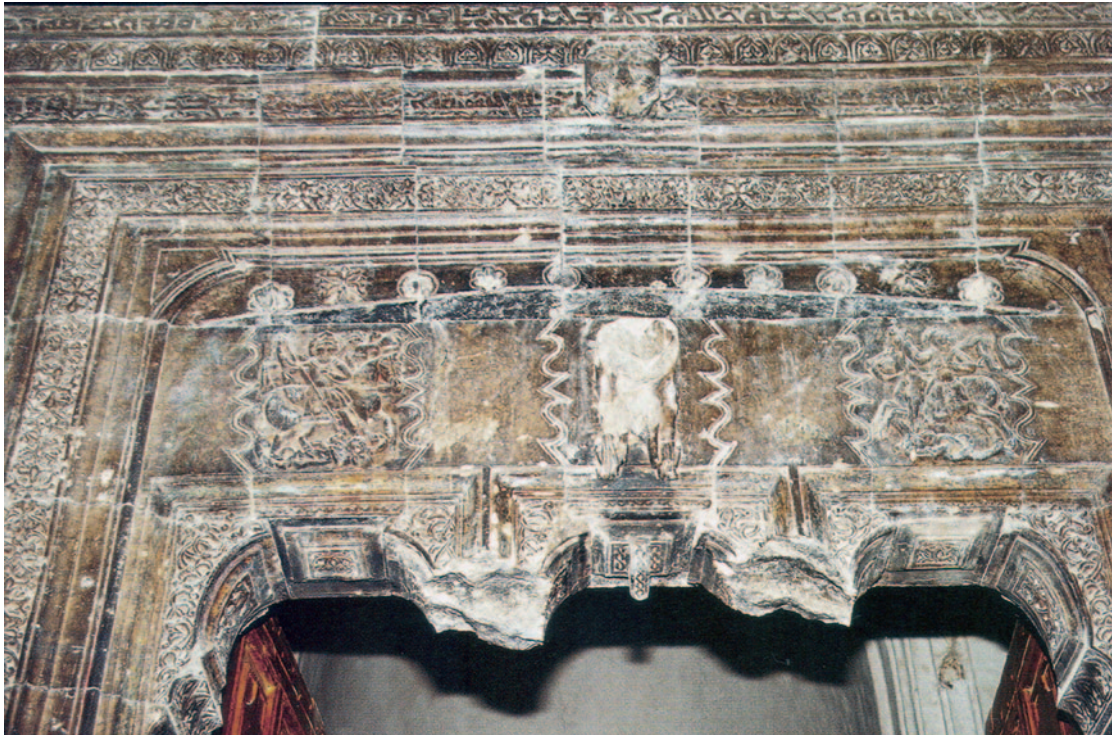
⁹¹ Leroy 1958, 240; Fiey 1965, 600, 601 n. 5.

⁹² Scholz 1994-1995, 317.

⁹³ Walter 2003a, 111, 129. In the earliest versions of his *Pas-sio*, the martyrdom of St George is situated during the reign of a certain king Dadianus. It is interesting to find that in Coptic versions of the story, Dadianus is referred to as 'the dragon' (Wallis Budge 1930, 34-35; O'Leary 1937, 141).

⁹⁴ Der Nersessian 1965, 19, Pls 49-50. St George and St Theodore are accompanied by St Sergius, who is killing a vicious beast, possibly a panther.

⁹⁵ Hunt 2000, 1-29; Weitzmann 1967, B43-44, Pls XXIX, XCVII-XCVIII has dated the triptych to the ninth or tenth century and has argued for a Palestinian provenance.



Pl. 15. Deir Mar Behnam near Qaraqosh, Royal Gate (After Diwersy/Wand 2001, Pl. 404)



Pl. 16. Deir Mar Behnam near Qaraqosh, Royal Gate, detail (Courtesy of R. Jabre Mouawad)

his own distinctive victim, is broadly comparable with our example, but whereas the two mounted saints at Deir Mar Behnam are depicted facing each other, the horsemen in Aght'amar and on the triptych are all shown riding to the right.

From the point of view of composition and medium of execution, the most eye-catching analogies are with a number of reliefs decorating church entrances in Armenia and Georgia, where SS George and Theodore are often depicted facing each other while attacking their traditional adversaries. This iconographical type is represented on a relief from the church at Nikorcminda, on the tympanum over the east door which gives access to the church, dating from 1010-1014⁹⁶. Between the two confronted saints is a rendering of the Transfiguration. The same composition is repeated in the tympanum over the west door, though here the central depiction of the Transfiguration is replaced by a standing figure of Christ, his left hand holding an open book and his right hand raised in blessing⁹⁷. On the left, St Theodore is represented with his characteristic pointed beard, spearing a knotted dragon, and on the right, St George killing the Roman Emperor Diocletian, who recoils below the galloping horse.

The iconographical type under discussion appears to have been developed much earlier than the eleventh century. Two anonymous horsemen killing a man and a dragon are represented, for instance, on one of the templon screens in the church at Tsebelda, alternately dated by scholars to the sixth or seventh century⁹⁸. This subject is repeated in the tympanum over the west entrance to the church at Vale, Georgia (late tenth century)⁹⁹. A framed relief on the exterior of the church at Martvili, Georgia (912-957), depicts two mounted saints killing a

double-headed dragon¹⁰⁰. At the church in Ughuzlu, Armenia, an enthroned Virgin and Child (Hodegetria?) between two anonymous equestrian saints is depicted within a framed relief, probably dating from around 1000¹⁰¹. This example shows that there are previous examples of a Virgin and Child in such a composition, which would support Scholz's reading of the central scene of the Royal Gate at Deir Mar Behnam. Although it is now placed above the walled-up southern entrance of the church, its original location is unknown; the relief may have been placed above a doorway, but could also have been part of a templon screen or some other type of liturgical furnishing. Since the relief is severely damaged, the saints cannot be distinguished by their facial features. Both horsemen have small figures beneath their horses, the left of which figures is clearly pierced by a lance, but it cannot be ascertained whether they are dragons or human beings. Be that as it may, the iconographical type of two confronted equestrian saints killing a man and a dragon respectively continued to be popular, appearing in numerous wall paintings dating from between the tenth and thirteenth centuries¹⁰².

Concerning their iconography and composition, the two mounted saints facing each other at Deir Mar Behnam clearly recall the symmetrical disposition of St George and St Theodore killing a man and a dragon respectively. In spite of the chronological and geographical differences, both the composition and disposition above a doorway are so similar that they must be part of the pictorial tradition outlined above. Local sculptural practices may have played an important part in copying this composition from the Georgian and Armenian region, especially since the architectural and sculptural influence from this region on Anatolia and North Mesopotamia was traditionally strong. In discussing the influence of contemporary Armenian church architecture on Muslim buildings in Anatolia, Robert Hillenbrand has remarked the following: 'The resemblance extends beyond style to the very choice of animal – rams, bulls, lions, eagles and so on – as well as to their location in spandrels, over doorways, and their use as water-spouts, gargoyles and corbels'¹⁰³. The fluid transmission of Christian imagery would also fit into this general picture. Besides, continuous influence from the Armenian region on Deir Mar Behnam itself is attested by a stone tablet in the mausoleum situated beside the monastery, probably embedded in its wall during reconstruction work around 1300,

⁹⁶ Alpago-Novello/Beridze/Lafontaine-Dosogne 1980, 36, Fig. 450.

⁹⁷ Baltrušaitis 1929, 58, 61, Fig. 99, Pl. LXVII, -108; Neubauer 1976, 126-127, Pl. 57; Thierry 1999, Fig. 6.

⁹⁸ Thierry 1999, 240 n. 40; Velmans 1996, 115.

⁹⁹ Scholz 1982, Fig. 1; Velmans 1996, 115.

¹⁰⁰ Baltrušaitis 1929, 48, Fig. 109; Thierry 1999, 240, Fig. 5; Velmans 1996, 115 (seventh century); Walter 2003a, 129.

¹⁰¹ Strzygowski 1918, 215-216, 428, Pls 253, 465.

¹⁰² Velmans 1996, 115-116, Figs 79, 93, with further references; Walter 2003, 129 n. 127.

¹⁰³ Hillenbrand 1994, 308. On the reciprocal nature of this influence, see Gierlichs 1996, 80-106, who also points out that Georgian craftsmen (woodworkers and sculptors) were working in Anatolia and North Mesopotamia during the period under discussion.

which in general appearance closely resembles Armenian Khatchkars (memorial stones)¹⁰⁴. Not only does it convey a central cross, around which are grouped grapes, honeycombs and doves, but it is also inscribed with an Armenian inscription invoking the intercession of the saint. The last line ends with a Syriac inscription mentioning the name of the donor¹⁰⁵.

On the basis of the preceding discussion, it may be concluded that the compositional predecessors of the scene represented on the lintel of the Royal Gate at Deir Mar Behnam are located in the Armenian and Georgian sculptural tradition. Although the artists at Deir Mar Behnam made use of this particular composition, they obviously did not represent St George together with St Theodore. Whereas the latter is traditionally depicted with a pointed beard, both saints at Deir Mar Behnam are beardless. In addition to this modification, the saint on the left is not spearing a human being but a demon, an adaptation which, as we shall see, may have been the result of local influence. Therefore the question remains as to whom these two equestrian saints were originally meant to represent. Given that the church was dedicated to Mar Behnam, it may be assumed that at least one of them was identified as the patron saint by thirteenth-century worshippers visiting the church. In the following, it will be affirmed that the demon-slayer on the Royal Gate is Mar Behnam, as suggested by most previous scholars dealing with the subject.

Mar Behnam as an equestrian saint and St George as a dragon-slayer

Additional evidence for the identification of the saint piercing a demon as Mar Behnam may be found in the fact that there are two other renderings of an equestrian saint in the same church, both of which show similar iconography: a stone tablet in the sanctuary, in close vicinity of the altar; and a stucco relief on the east wall of the church, to the left of the Royal Gate. The close correspondence between the three representations seems to point to a local tradition in which Mar Behnam is represented as an equestrian saint killing the figure of a demon. But before turning to the stone tablet and the stucco sculpture in detail, some preliminary comments should be made on the life and the cult of Mar Behnam.

According to tradition, Behnam and Sarah were martyrs who lived in the second half of the fourth century in the Persian Empire¹⁰⁶. They were the children of a local Assyrian king, whose soldiers killed them after they converted to Christianity. At least from the tenth century onwards, several monasteries, churches, and chapels were dedicated to Behnam, the oldest known church being the one that was consecrated in 961 in Tripoli, Lebanon¹⁰⁷. Churches bearing his name, belonging to different religious denominations, can be found in Southeast Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Ethiopia¹⁰⁸. Although J.M. Fiey suggests that the story of the saint's martyrdom may have been written down in the period between the fourth and sixth century, the oldest surviving account can be found in a Syriac manuscript dating from 1197, now in the British Library (Add. 12174), which contains the lives of saints and church fathers¹⁰⁹.

Concerning the visual records of the saint, it should be mentioned that if the demon-slayer on the Royal Gate is indeed Mar Behnam, as will be argued below, this would be one of the earliest documented depictions of him. Of particular interest is the fact that he is represented as a warrior saint on horseback, especially given that there is no mention in the hagiographical tradition of Mar Behnam having a military background, although he is, admittedly, of royal descent. The reasons for his admittance to the celestial army, alongside soldiers such as St George and St Theodore, are presently unknown. It may have been the result of a local oral version of the saint's life, or even simply because of his status as a miracle-worker and a martyr, the latter of which predicates is indeed one of the essential elements of the hagiography of equestrian saints. Whatever the reasons, this iconographical type seems to have spread quickly. From the end of the thirteenth century, at least, the image of Mar Behnam on horseback enjoyed a relative popularity

¹⁰⁴ For a general introduction to Armenian Khatchkars, see Azarian 1977.

¹⁰⁵ Fiey 1970, 20.

¹⁰⁶ Bedjan 1891, II, 397-441. For a general introduction to the life of Mar Behnam, see Younansardaroud 2000, with further references; Novák/Younansardaroud 2002, 167-170; Wiessner 1978.

¹⁰⁷ Wallis Budge 1932, I, 167.

¹⁰⁸ Wiessner 1978, 120.

¹⁰⁹ Wright 1870-1872, II, 1129-1139, 1146.

in Ethiopia, where he is featured in wall painting and manuscript illumination¹¹⁰. In the thirteenth-century paintings in the Church of Mādhane Alām (Redeemer of the World) near Lalibāla, for instance, several representations of equestrian saints can be found, including St Mercury piercing Julian the Apostate, St Theodore slaying a dragon, St George spearing the Roman official Euchiū, and interestingly enough, Mar Behnam¹¹¹.

In contrast to his alleged depiction at the Monastery of Mar Behnam, at the Church of Mādhane Alām he is explicitly identified through the addition of a clarifying Ethiopian inscription ('*saint Marbāhnam the martyr*'), making this the oldest securely named representation of the saint. Mar Behnam is shown riding to the right on a brown horse. The nimbed saint has short dark hair, and appears to be beardless. In accordance with his hagiography, the saint seems to be dressed as a prince rather than a soldier. Although the other equestrian saints in the church are explicitly rendered as military men, Mar Behnam does not carry any arms and is not wearing armour. He holds a prolonged cross in his right hand instead of the usual lance, possibly as a sign of his martyrdom. Besides this modification, another common attribute of equestrian saints is not featured here: the small figure of a defeated enemy – whether a ferocious beast or a human being – that is usually found lying prostrate between the legs of a horse. It is precisely this kind of element that can help us to identify the saint as Mar Behnam at his sanctuary in North Mesopotamia.

As mentioned before, the iconography of the demon-slayer on lintel of the Royal Gate can be compared with a crudely sculptured panel (ca 30 by 22 cm) embedded in the west wall of the sanctuary, representing an anonymous horseman carved in low relief (Pl. 17)¹¹². It is generally agreed that this relief dates roughly from between the second half of the twelfth, and the first half of the thirteenth century. The fact that the panel is located in the sanctuary, in close connection with the altar, where the relics of Mar Behnam were probably kept at least to the end of the thirteenth century, would support the hypothesis that the mounted figure depicted on it was meant to represent the church's patron saint. The saint is beardless, and his head is covered with a small pointed crown or cap. He is dressed in a long tunic with a highly stylized *chlamys* streaming behind him. In both ears he wears an earring in the form of a cross. With his left hand, the saint holds the reins of the horse, in his raised right hand, a lance surmounted by a cross, with which he transfixes a horned demon prostrate under his horse, as does the figure on the Royal Gate. Fiey has erroneously described the military uniform of the equestrian saint as 'crusader costume', for it should be emphasized that the *chlamys* and tunic were originally borrowed from classical models and remained an essential part of the military outfit from then on¹¹³. Earlier analogies can also be found for the distinctive rendering of the victim as a horned demon. On a silver cup at Učguli, Georgia, a mounted figure can be found who is piercing a prostrate figure with horns on its head. This piece, for which a Syrian provenance has been proposed, is variably dated to the sixth or eight to ninth century¹¹⁴.

The obvious iconographic similarities between the mounted saint on the small panel in the sanctuary and the demon-slayer on the Royal Gate does not allow a definite identification of the two saints featured, as they both lack a clarifying inscription. However, to these two examples can be added a third representation of a saint on horseback attacking a demon, for which the interpretation as Mar Behnam is confirmed. A large polychrome relief (ca 3.75 by 2.20 m) on the east wall of the church features an equestrian saint trampling a prostrate figure between the legs of his horse (Pl. 18)¹¹⁵. Due to the damaged state in which the sculpture has survived, it is difficult to establish all the different iconographic details. It is nevertheless clear that the reclining figure is portrayed as a victim, with a

¹¹⁰ Rainieri 1996, 100-103; Wallis Budge 1976, 228-229. See also the examples listed in *Māzgābā s'ālat*.

¹¹¹ Balicka-Witakowska 2004, 25, Figs 6, 27.

¹¹² Fiey 1965, 602-604, Pl. F (drawing); *idem* 1970, 16; Leroy 1964, 69; Preusser 1911, 5, Pl. 6.2.

¹¹³ Walter 2003a, 22. An example of a crusader attribute which was indeed adopted by local Christian artists, even outside former crusader territory, is the so-called crusader banner which consists of a white flag with a red cross. This type of flag is often connected with representations of equestrian saints such as George, Theodore, Sergius and Bachus in Lebanon and Syria, where it is found on wall paintings, as well as on several icons. Cf. Immerzeel 2004a, 39-48, Pls 2, 4-5, 13, 19-20.

¹¹⁴ Walter 2000, 410, Fig. 7, with further references; *idem* 2003a, 37.

¹¹⁵ Fiey 1965, 604-605; *idem* 1970, 14-15; Leroy 1958, 240-241; *idem* 1964, 69; Preusser 1911, 5, Pl. 16.1; Zibawi 2005, 346, Figs 6-7. The stucco figures have retained traces of paint, mainly red, grey and blue.



Pl. 17. Deir Mar Behnam near Qaraqosh, sanctuary, stone relief (Courtesy of R. Jabre Mouawad)

snake's tail emanating from his back, which clearly distinguishes him as a demon. The facial features of the mounted saint can no longer be determined. He is haloed and wears a tunic with a belt and a *chlamys*, characteristically billowing out behind him. In his left hand, the saint holds the reins of his horse, while his right hand is raised. With this hand he receives a scroll, handed to him by one of the three nimbed flying angels who are shown carrying what appears to be a crown over the saint's head. The entire scene is framed by a band with an Arabic and Syriac inscription, mentioning the commissioner and the name of the artist who produced the sculpture¹¹⁶.

Although the accompanying inscriptions do not reveal the saint's identity, we may safely assume that it is Mar Behnam, because he is complemented by a second stucco sculpture in high relief directly on the opposite, depicting his martyred sister Sarah (Pl. 19). She is rendered as a single standing figure placed within exactly the same type of frame as the corresponding mounted saint. In spite of her fragmentary state, she is securely identified as St Sarah through an added Syriac inscription mentioning her name¹¹⁷. More problematic, however, is the fact that both stucco sculptures have proved difficult to date precisely on the basis of stylistic analysis, because of a lack of sufficient reference material. Moreover, the iconography represented does not seem to be

restricted to one particular period¹¹⁸. In order to establish a date, scholars have often referred to the presence of a Syriac inscription painted in close proximity to the mounted saint, which states that work undertaken in the interior of the church was interrupted due to a drought in the year 1861 of the Greeks (i.e., AD 1550), thereby taking this year as a *terminus ante quem* for the execution of the sculptures¹¹⁹. Although it is unclear what this work exactly entailed, the inscription may refer to a redecoration of the church interior, as the inscription is placed in this location. Indeed, a dating in the fifteenth or sixteenth century would accord well with the general history of the monastery. During this period Deir Mar Behnam rose in the hierarchy of the Syrian Orthodox Church, as several *mafrans* lived and were buried there¹²⁰. The growing importance may also have generated new restoration and artistic activities within the church. Be that as it may, what is important within the present study is that the stuccoed mounted saint is Mar Behnam.

Even though the large stucco relief is the oldest securely identified image of the saint attacking a demon in the monastery dedicated to him, whether dating from the thirteenth or even the sixteenth century, it is arguable that this particular imagery was inspired by an older prototype, possibly the two stone sculptures from the same church. Taking these three examples together, they seem to point to a local tradition in which the saint was represented as a horseman defeating the figure of a demon. Cogently, we may safely assume that one of the equestrian saints depicted on the lintel of the Royal Gate, the one spearing a demon, was meant to represent Mar Behnam. It is of course entirely fitting for the patron saint to be represented in one of the most important locations within the church dedicated to him. Most scholars have identified his counterpart on the right as St George, but is there any art historical evidence to corroborate this assumption?

It should be mentioned that if the saint on the right is indeed St George, it would be one of the first representations in the region of him slaying the dragon, for this famous legend does not seem to be represented in medieval iconography from Lebanon and Syria before the fourteenth century¹²¹. In accordance with the Eastern Christian tradition, he is either represented killing a man (see above), or in the far more popular scene of him rescuing the young slave from Mitilene¹²². In Egypt, the oldest

¹¹⁶ These inscriptions are translated into French by Harrak 2004, 97.

¹¹⁷ Harrak 2004, 97.

¹¹⁸ Future finds may prove fruitful for dating purposes, perhaps in the case of the outsize rendering of the crown carried by three flying angels, for which we have not been able to find accurate parallels. They seem to be quite distantly removed from the more natural rendering of flying genii or angels holding up a canopy over the head of a ruler or saintly figure, a popular pattern in North Mesopotamia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with which they are clearly connected. Examples of this theme are listed in Snelders/Immerzeel 2004, 128-129, n. 80.

¹¹⁹ Fiey 1965, 608-609; Leroy 1958, 240-241; *idem* 1964, 69; Pognon 1907, 133 n. 1.

¹²⁰ Fiey 1965, 586; *idem* 1970, 5; Novák/Younansardaroud 2002, 175; Younansardaroud 2000, 195.

¹²¹ Immerzeel 2003a, 278-280; *idem* 2004a, 34.

¹²² Example of St George killing a man: above the western entrance of the Chapel of Deir Saydet Hammatur in Qusba, Lebanon (thirteenth century): Immerzeel 2003-2004, 178-181, Figs 3-4. Examples of St George rescuing the slave from Mitilene, in Lebanon: Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat; Church of Mar Saba, Eddé al-Batrun,



*Pl. 18. Deir Mar Behnam near Qaraqosh, east wall, stucco relief: Mar Behnam
(Courtesy of R. Jabre Mouawad)*



Pl. 19. *Deir Mar Behnam near Qaraqosh, nave, stucco relief: St Sarah (Courtesy of R. Jabre Mouawad)*

known representation of St George and the dragon can be found on an early thirteenth-century icon from the Monastery of St Catherine, which consists

and possibly the Church of Mart Nohra and Mart Sophia, Dmalsa; from Syria: extramural chapel, Crac des Chevaliers; Deir Mar Musa al-Habashi. On this subject, see Cruikshank Dodd 2001a, 151; *idem* 2004, 71-72; Grotowski 2003, 27-77; Immerzeel 2004a, 32-33; Walter 2003a, 130.

¹²³ Catalogue New York 2004, no. 228.

¹²⁴ Walter 2003a, 140-142. The author also points out that the scene of St George rescuing the princess quickly spread to Russia and Greece: it is also represented in the Church of St George in Stara Ladoga (Russia; 1167-1168), the Church of the Anargyroi in Kastoria (Greece, ca 1180).

¹²⁵ Greek Patriarchal Library, Jerusalem, cod. 2. Walter 1995, 320-321; *idem* 2003a, 140-142.

¹²⁶ Walter 2003a, 121 n. 80.

¹²⁷ Thierry 1999, 234-235, sch. 1.

¹²⁸ Immerzeel 2004a, 32, Fig. 2.

¹²⁹ Walter 2003a, 125 n. 99, 128, Fig. 28; *idem* 2003b, 99-102, Figs 12.9-12.10, both with further references.

of a central panel showing a standing St George framed by twenty scenes from his life, including the episode of him rescuing the princess¹²³. Although the painting of the vita icon is Byzantine in style and all the added inscriptions are in Greek, several details suggest Georgian influence and patronage. Particularly noteworthy is the small figure of a suppliant donor standing next to St George, who is dressed in the white garment of a priest and wears a monk's cap. The donor appears to be of Georgian origin, because the caption identifies him as John the Iberian. This John may have been one of the Georgian monks that inhabited the monastery at least from the eleventh century onwards. Perhaps he donated the icon to the no longer extant Chapel of St George, which at the time was used by the Georgian community living at Sinai. Accordingly, it may be postulated that the appearance of St George rescuing the princess is due to Georgian influence, especially given that the oldest currently known representations of the legend, dating from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, are found in Georgian churches dedicated to St George¹²⁴. This hypothesis finds support in the fact that the earliest literary reference to St George's encounter with a dragon is in an eleventh-century Georgian manuscript, which contains an account of the saint rescuing the princess from the dragon¹²⁵.

In his fundamental study on the warrior saints in Byzantine art, Christopher Walter has pointed out that at least from the ninth century numerous depictions of St George killing a dragon *without the princess* can be found in wall paintings from Cappadocia, testifying to the existence of this theme before the iconographical type with the princess became established¹²⁶. Above the entrance of the Yılanlı kilise (Church of the Dragon) in Hasan Dağı (ca 900), for instance, SS Theodore and George are shown attacking a double-headed dragon, which is placed between them¹²⁷. Both mounted saints are clearly identified by accompanying inscriptions. In contrast to common practice, St Theodore is represented riding a white horse, while the horse of St George is red-brown; traditionally it is the other way round¹²⁸. The same scene is repeated in the Pürenli seki kilisesi (ca 900), again at Hasan Dağı. To these examples can be added three wall paintings dating from around the first half of the eleventh century, and two churches which may be dated to the end of the century¹²⁹. In these examples St George is invariably represented in the company of

St Theodore. Another interesting example which should be mentioned here is found in the Derin dere kilisesi near Ürgüp, where two equestrian saints are painted on the templon screen¹³⁰. Here the entrance to the apse is framed by two painted equestrian saints (ninth century), depicted on the west face of the chancel screen, of which the one on the left is spearing a dragon. Catherine Jolivet-Lévy suggests that they may be interpreted as St George and St Theodore. The oldest dated picture of St George alone killing a dragon, whether in Cappadocia or elsewhere, is in the Church of St Barbara, Soğanlı, from 1006 or 1021¹³¹.

The closest rendering of the dragon legend to that in Deir Mar Behnam, both chronologically and geographically, is found on a sculptured slab (ca 56 × 30 cm), possibly a gravestone, from Maraş in present Southeast Turkey¹³². According an Arabic inscription, it was made in the year H. 701, corresponding to AD 1301/02¹³³. The relief depicts St George on horseback spearing a knotted dragon; his identity is revealed in a Syriac caption. In accordance with the iconographic tradition, he is beardless and has short curly hair. St George is dressed in a tunic with a *chlamys* billowing out behind him. In his raised right hand he holds a lance, with which he pierces the dragon coiling below the horse. A striking iconographic detail is the pair of crowned angels that hold a canopy above the head of the saint, resembling the flying genii holding a canopy or diadem above the head of a secular Arabic ruler, a very popular theme in thirteenth-century Syrian and North-Mesopotamian metalwork and manuscript illumination¹³⁴.

As a preliminary conclusion, it may be argued that the identification of the rider on the right of the Royal Gate as St George has to remain a hypothesis. At the present state of research the interpretation is no less than guesswork, as contemporary equivalents originating from the same area are currently lacking. In North Mesopotamia the oldest depiction of St George slaying the dragon dates from around 1300, i.e. at least fifty years after the execution of the reliefs at Deir Mar Behnam. Furthermore, it appears that there is no literary or epigraphic evidence that could corroborate such an interpretation. We are on safer ground in case of the demon-slayer on the left. In our opinion there is enough circumstantial evidence to suggest that he should indeed be viewed as Mar Behnam.

Variation on the equestrian saints: falconers in the Church of Mar Ahudemme

In the Church of Mar Ahudemme (or Mar Hudeni) in Mosul, a Royal Gate can be found which is similar to the one in the church at Deir Mar Behnam (Pl. 20). It has generally been dated to the mid-thirteenth century on the basis of stylistic analysis¹³⁵. The construction of the church itself may go back to the tenth century; it currently lies around six meter below street level. During restoration activities in the 1970s, the Church of Mar Ahudemme was heavily reconstructed, and the Royal Gate was transferred from its original location to a hall that was built over the church¹³⁶. The lintel is decorated symmetrically with two enthroned figures each juxtaposed with a horseman, placed on either side of an almost entirely effaced cross, of which only the upper contours have remained visible (Pl. 21)¹³⁷. The two horsemen occupy the corners and are represented facing each other, the rider on the left holding a falcon on each wrist, while the one on the right carries a falcon on his left hand and has a second one on his shoulder. This rider has a nimbus and appears to be carrying an unidentifiable object in his raised right hand. Both horsemen are dressed with a long tunic and a belt, and have pointed caps on their heads. On the ground, underneath the horse on the right, stands a goblet. The enthroned figure on the right is portrayed sitting on a platform throne, supported by two addorsed lions with their tails ending in a frontal lion's head. The figure seems to be wearing a tunic (or coat), the hem of which is diagonally crossed at the chest, and is adorned with the characteristic Seljuk headgear, from which dan-

¹³⁰ Jolivet-Lévy 1991, 190, Pl. 117.

¹³¹ Walter 1995, 320, with further references.

¹³² Archaeological Museum, Adana, Turkey, inv. no. 76B.

¹³³ Süslü 1984, 169-183, Pls 1a-c; Gierlichs 1996, 31.

¹³⁴ For a list of examples of this well-known motif, see Snelders/Immerzeel 2004, n. 80.

¹³⁵ Fiey 1959, 141-147, Fig. 11, Pl. 9; Leroy 1964, 67; Gierlichs 1996, 238-239 (with further references); Sarre/Herzfeld 1911-1920, II-III, 294-295, Fig. 281, Pls CV, CVI3, CVII.

¹³⁶ Habbi 1980 (without page indications). On the history of the church, see Fiey 1959, 142-143.

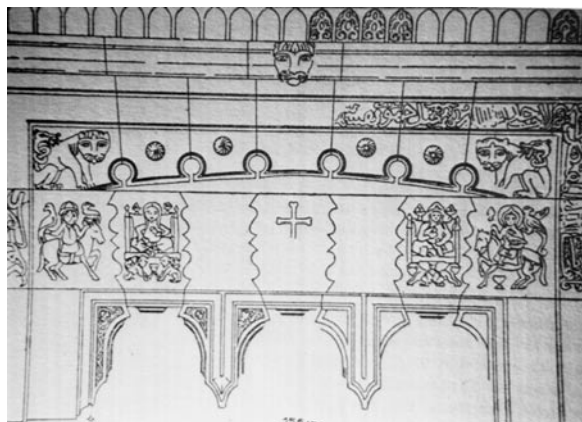
¹³⁷ Fiey 1959, 142 suggests that the church was pillaged at some point, during which the cross could have easily been obliterated.



Pl. 20. Church of Mar Ahudemme, Mosul, Royal Gate
(After Fiey 1959, Fig. 11)

gle two pigtails¹³⁸. In his left hand the figure holds a *mandil*, a small napkin/towel that was used during banqueting¹³⁹. The throne has a high rectangular backrest with two posts on the sides. At the upper side of the throne two bowls of fruit (?) can be found. The depiction of the enthroned figure is repeated on the left, albeit with some minor changes in the ordering of the iconographic details: this left-hand figure is represented holding the cup in his left hand and the *mandil* in his right. Furthermore, instead of resting on addorsed lions, the throne is supported by two confronted lions on either side of a frontal lion's head.

Whereas the equestrian figures at Deir Mar Behnam are clearly distinguished as Christian mounted saints, the decoration programme at the Church of Mar Ahudemme does not contain any distinctively Christian elements at all, apart from the now lost cross on the keystone. As has already been noted in previous publications on the subject,



Pl. 21. Church of Mar Ahudemme, Mosul, drawing of Royal Gate (After Sarre/Herzfeld 1911-1920, Fig. 281)

the motifs represented on the lintel of the Royal Gate are rooted in the Islamic pictorial tradition¹⁴⁰. A comparison between the imagery represented on the lintel with examples found in Islamic contexts, or at least non-Christian contexts, shows that they belong to the stock repertoire of Islamic art decoration as found in North Mesopotamia and elsewhere. It is well known that the figure of the man seated cross-legged with a goblet, the central motif of the 'Princely cycle', is one of the most frequently used motifs in Islamic art, appearing in all different sorts of artistic media. Probably derived from Sasanian models, it became popular in Islamic art during the Abbasid period. Representations of the man with a goblet are often coupled with hunting scenes¹⁴¹. An early example of this juxtaposition can be found on a tenth-century medal from Iran. Its obverse shows a prince seated on a lion throne holding a goblet, flanked by two attendants, one of which is carrying a pitcher. On the reverse, the prince is represented on horseback, as a hunter with a falcon on his wrist. Dorothy G. Shepherd has pointed out that these kinds of medallions had talismanic values, as they were clearly intended to be worn¹⁴². It may therefore be assumed that the scenes depicted on them also conveyed an apotropaic meaning, which in turn, may have foreshadowed their use on a portal. Some contemporary examples from North Mesopotamia showing these motifs include an inlaid candlestick from Siirt (second half of the thirteenth century) decorated with three roundels, each containing an enthroned figure holding a beaker, and a band of horsemen, two of which are falconers¹⁴³, and a Seljuk steel mirror, dating

¹³⁸ Reitlinger 1951, 19.

¹³⁹ On the use and depictions of *manādil*, see Vorderstrasse 2005, 68.

¹⁴⁰ Roux 1982, 89-90, Fig. 7; Gladiss 1983, 240-241.

¹⁴¹ On the coupling of banquet and hunt scenes, see Shepherd 1974.

¹⁴² Shepherd 1974, 84, Figs 5-6.

¹⁴³ Allan 1990, no. 8, 62-65, Pl. on 63.

from the first half of the thirteenth century, with an image of a falconer on horseback¹⁴⁴. This central princely figure is framed by a frieze filled with real and fantastic animals, including a pair of entwined dragons. A particularly interesting iconographic parallel can be found on a number of unglazed jars of barbotine ware, each with several depictions of a cross-legged sitting man holding a beaker¹⁴⁵. Note especially the correspondence with the characteristic Seljuk headgear from which two pigtailed dangle, and the *mandil* in the figure's left hand.

At first sight, the enthroned figures and falconers in the Church of Mar Ahudemme only appear to mirror contemporary secular Islamic iconography based on the pastimes of the royal court, and do not seem to have an explicit meaning within their Christian context. From this observation, the question arises as to why these specific motifs were chosen and how this decoration programme should be explained. The obvious analogies with contemporary Islamic art have recently lead Joachim Gierlichs to dismiss the decoration as a mere coincidence, simply viewing the falconers and enthroned figures as decorative ornamentation which does not convey any deeper religious meaning¹⁴⁶. He argues that the artists randomly chose a number of motifs from the common pictorial repertoire of the time. This viewpoint is, in our opinion, incorrect. First, it does not take into account the possible involvement of the initiators and commissioners, probably the ecclesiastical leaders of the church or a wealthy Christian townsman from Mosul. Since they provided the finances for the decoration, they may have had some influence on the creation of the work. Although it is impossible to determine the exact amount of input they may have had in the compilation of the iconographical programme, it is at least clear that they approved of its final outcome, i.e. the images obviously meant something to them. Secondly, the craftsmen did not place the enthroned figures and falconers at the entrance of the sanctuary by chance, but had reasons to do so. This remark gains importance if one bears in mind that this particular position is of the greatest symbolic significance within a church setting.

Within the study of Eastern Christian art, growing attention has been paid to the relationship between the function of different church sections and their individual decoration. In her fundamental study on the twelfth and thirteenth-century wall

paintings from the altar room in Coptic churches, Gertrud van Loon has made clear that the choice of particular subjects was determined by the liturgical function of the room in which they were represented¹⁴⁷. The architectural symbolism of the Royal Gate is closely related to the function of this section of the church building. It is located in the wall which separates the nave from the sanctuary, the so-called Holy of Holies, the place where the Eucharistic Liturgy is performed. Traditionally, the altar room is compared to heaven and the Heavenly Jerusalem. From this follows the architectural symbolism of the Royal Gate itself: as it gives access to the sanctuary, it symbolizes an entrance or gate to heaven. Therefore, the notion of a set of images devoid of any significant content would appear to be in flagrant contrast with a position that radiates with religious symbolism. On the contrary, such a position imbues the imagery depicted there with meaning.

Accepting the view that there is a clear correlation between the function and symbolism of a church section and the symbolism of its decoration, the choice of the enthroned figures with beakers and falconers may be explained by the interpretation of the motifs themselves. In her profound iconographical analysis of the scenes of the 'Princely cycle', in which she focuses mainly on the figure of the prince with a goblet, Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen has shown that these images cannot merely be interpreted as decorative ornamentation; rather they are renderings of paradise, based on the earthly pleasures¹⁴⁸. This eschatological interpretation would be in accordance with the place in which the sculptures are located in the church. It may therefore be assumed that those who were involved in the creation of the decoration programme, whether the artists themselves or the initiators, were familiar with the symbolic content of the imagery.

If the assumption that the enthroned figures holding beakers and the falconers were chosen

¹⁴⁴ Topkapi Sarayı Müzesi, İstanbul, 2/1792. Catalogue New York 1997, no. 282, with further references; Roxburgh 2005, no. 72, Pl. on 123.

¹⁴⁵ Reitlinger 1951, 18-19, Fig. 19; Sourdél/Sourdél 1968, 385, Fig. 154; Otto-Dorn 1982, 157-158, Fig. 11.

¹⁴⁶ Gierlichs 1996, 239.

¹⁴⁷ Van Loon 1999.

¹⁴⁸ Gelfer-Jørgensen 1986. Shepherd (1974) comes to the same conclusion, while differing in the details.

because they represent paradise is correct, a second question arises: why did the artists or patrons choose an Islamic portrayal of paradise, and not a Christian representation? The fact that a Muslim model was used shows that no discrepancy was perceived between the Muslim background of this model and its use within a Christian context. Moreover, the stereotyped representations of the enthroned figure with a beaker and the falconer do not contain any details of a particularly Islamic nature. Indeed, they are rather ambiguous images, generic portrayals of paradise that can either be 'Islamicized' or 'Christianized' depending on the context in which they are represented. The iconographic resemblance with contemporary Islamic art is, however, very striking because it demonstrates a distinct conformity between Christian and Islamic art.

Finally, we would like to put forward a second hypothesis, in this case focusing only on the confronted falconers. Considering their location on a Royal Gate, the two mounted falconers facing each other at the Church of Mar Ahudem-meh are clearly reminiscent of the equestrian saints at Deir Mar Behnam, which are closely related to these depictions, both topographically and temporally. It may be postulated that the worshippers visiting the church were familiar with the tradition of placing mounted saints either above or next to the doorway leading either into the church or the sanctuary, as it was already a widespread phenomenon from the Early Christian period onwards. In turn, it may be suggested that the falconers were most probably viewed by contemporary audiences as a fashionable variation of the Christian mounted saints, chosen for the 'equestrian image' they convey, an interpretation which we have already put forward in case of the falconers on the wooden sanctuary screen in the Church of Sitt Barbara, Cairo. Especially in view of their position, the reliefs of the falconers should be considered as having the same protective function as the traditional equestrian saints. The difference between the choice of either the traditional equestrian saints or the fashionable variant of the falconers may have been the result of the particular context for which they were intended, the latter being more appropriate in an urban context than in a monastic setting, which is arguably more conservative. Further research may shed some more light on this matter.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Given the popularity of equestrian saints in Eastern Christian churches, regardless of their religious denomination, it is not surprising to find them as a central part of the decoration programme in churches from Egypt and North Mesopotamia. The representations of holy horsemen in these two areas are often distinguished by their position within the church, as well as the medium in which they are executed. Whereas most examples from sanctuaries in Lebanon and Syria are painted on the side walls of the nave, their Egyptian and North-Mesopotamian counterparts are also prominently found framing the entrance to the sanctuary. It is especially in this particular position that the artists and commissioners profited most fully from the protective capacity of the mounted warrior saints. In addition to painted examples, such figures are also found on wood and stone carving, as part of the decoration of wooden sanctuary screens in Egypt, and on stone sanctuary portals in North Mesopotamia, respectively.

Sometimes the protective value of the equestrian saints is reinforced, if they are part of a wider iconographical programme which incorporates a larger variety of patterns conveying a prophylactic message, for instance, alongside military angels and standing warrior saints. Within this broad iconographical repertoire, we have been able to include patterns which are reminiscent of the traditional equestrian saint, such as the unarmed saint on horseback and the mounted falconer. While the former is still clearly characterized as a distinct Christian mounted saint, the latter does not convey any Christian attributes at all. He is borrowed rather from the popular visual repertory of the so-called Princely cycle. These kinds of hunters are first encountered on the sanctuary screen of the Church of Sitt Barbara, Old Cairo. Although the decoration of this screen has traditionally been seen as an enigma, this point of view is in need of correction. We have pointed out that adorning sanctuary screens with motifs taken from the general artistic milieu was common practice at the time, and as such these screens all reflect the general aesthetics of contemporary Islamic art. Moreover, the screen does not constitute the only example of antithetically arranged mounted falconers located at the entrance to the sanctuary; they are also encountered on the Royal Gate at the Church of Mar Ahudem-meh in Mosul.

The use on both monuments of popular patterns shared with Islamic art highlights yet again the artistic symbioses between Christians and Muslims at the time, a phenomenon encountered in every kind of medium and in all regions in which the two communities lived in close proximity to each other. While a shared visual culture may explain the mere occurrence of paired falconers within a Christian context, it does not provide us with their meaning. The Eastern Christian tradition of placing coupled equestrian saints at entrances provides the key for the interpretation of the falconers. We have suggested that they are a fashionable variant of the mounted warrior saint, chosen for the generic 'equestrian image' they convey. Simultaneously, we have argued that the choice of these popular patterns may be regarded as a clue about the social background of the commissioners of the works, probably rich members of the intellectual urban elite. In our opinion, establishing the identity of the commissioner is more important for understanding the context that led to the creation of these monuments, than trying to trace the religious background of the artists. Although the limited number of the examples, as well as their chronological and geographical differences, as yet precludes talking of a tradition, the double occurrence should at least warn us not to dismiss these as mere coincidences, for the obvious similarities are too striking. Christians participated fully in the visual culture of their times, and the mounted falconers were simply one of the possibilities for placing apotropaic 'mounted saints' at the entrance of the sanctuary.

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Mosaic Artists in the Byzantine East: Towards a New Definition of Workshop Construction

Diklah ZOHAR

Early Byzantine mosaic floors in Israel and Jordan have survived to a remarkable degree and were applied in a variety of buildings: churches, synagogues, private villas, shops, bathhouses and burial-chambers. Modern study has often focused upon compositional and decorative aspects as well as upon the iconographic and iconological aspects of these mosaics. An alternative approach that starts to receive more attention in recent years concerns the process of production and the organization of mosaic workshops in antiquity. Yet the attempts of scholars to recognize workshops yielded no conclusive results up until now. One of the reasons is a vague definition of the term 'workshop', generally defined as a more or less permanent collective of craftsmen and assistants. Other reasons are the tendency for generalizations and the lack of a clear methodology. Avi Yonah was the first to advance the identification of the so-called 'Gaza Workshop', based upon the similarity in composition and some iconographic details¹. Although many followed him, his theory was rightly criticized by Hachlili. In her opinion, the use of pattern-books may explain the similarities between these mosaics². Also Dauphin criticized the methodology of Avi-Yonah and attempted to reach a more accurate identification of workshops by using additional technical criteria such as the size of tesserae and by using computer-aided codification methods³. Also this methodology did not yield much results. Ovadiah holds the opinion that the available material does not enable the identification of any specific workshop⁴, while Piccirillo replaces the term 'workshop' with 'team of craftsmen' referring to the mosaicists active in the area of Madaba⁵. This shift in terminology does not suggest a new definition to the term 'workshop', but it does turn the focus to the human aspect within the process of production. Recently, Weiss advanced the idea of a local workshop that was active in Sepphoris⁶.

Ancient literary sources do not shed light upon the organization of workshops⁷. Inscriptions provide some valuable information, but do not always supply the answers that the modern art historian seeks⁸. In fact, the material we possess does not even support the hypothesis that during the Early Byzantine period mosaic workshops existed at all⁹. It therefore seems that a new methodology needs to be developed in order to conduct this type of investigation. The current paper focuses on the individual artist as a starting point for the investigation of mosaic production in general and workshop organization in particular. Identification of the products of individual artists will bring the discussion about the organization of ancient mosaic workshops into a concrete framework; it will give the study a tool to investigate how individual artists interacted with each other and whether those who are recognized as working permanently together may be identified as creating a workshop, at least in practice.

Other fundamental questions that can be clarified by the identification of individual artists are the following: What is the geographical range in which

¹ Avi Yonah 1975.

² Hachlili 1987, 55.

³ Dauphin 1976, 130-131.

⁴ Ovadiah/Ovadiah 1987, 182.

⁵ Piccirillo 1992. On p. 77 he uses the term 'workshop' and on p. 174 the term 'team'.

⁶ Weiss 2003, 101.

⁷ A good summary of the information gained from ancient sources: Dunbabin 1999, 269-278.

⁸ An attempt to use mosaic inscriptions as an historical source yielded interesting results; Piccirillo 1984.

⁹ The inscriptions that appear on the mosaics do occasionally name the producing artists. They are mostly called by their first name. Some inscriptions only include a blessing upon the craftsmen, without mentioning their names, number or whether they formed a workshop. Unlike in other provinces, where the term *ex officina*, which may be translated as 'from the workshop [of]', sometimes appear, the inscriptions of Israel and Jordan do not mention a term that could be translated or interpreted as 'workshop' or 'team'.

an artist was active? Did artists specialize in certain iconography? To which degree would this specialization dictate the chosen subject or depicted motifs? Those mosaics that also include inscriptions may also shed light upon the relation between the artist and the commissioner and solve problems of chronology.

The purpose of this study is to present a methodology for the identification of individual mosaicists. This methodological tool is based upon an analysis of the morphology of figurative motifs and will be demonstrated through a discussion of the work of two artists that were active during the sixth century in the area of Madaba. The term morphology is used here to refer to the inlay-technique of the mosaic-tesserae and the method of the mosaicist to compose lines and colors into an illusion of a figurative form. In this segment of artistic creation, technique and style are closely associated. Therefore, the aspects involved in such an analysis are both technical, such as variation in size of tesserae, density of tesserae and directions of inlay, as well as stylistic characteristics such as linearity, contrasts, gradual use of color-tones, creation of illusion of three-dimensionality, proportions and the treatment of anatomy.

The hypothesis upon which this methodology rests is that an artist was trained following a certain artistic tradition, in which he developed his own characteristic style. Once an artist developed his own traits, he would consistently use them along his artistic career. If not used consistently, it will only be possible to identify an artist's oeuvre in those works where his typical characteristics were employed and identified.

Since the number of mosaicists who produced a floor is unknown prior to the investigation, the floor needs to be divided into sections that include not more than one figure each. Each figure is then analyzed separately, in order to find the morphological traits that identify the work of the artist who created it. In order to limit the range of this paper,

only the work of two artists will be presented. Unfortunately, we do not know the names of these artists. For this reason, each of them is called after an often-depicted figure out of his oeuvre. The one artists is named 'The artist of the flute-player', and the other one 'The artist of the gazelle'.

'THE ARTIST OF THE FLUTE-PLAYER'

'The artist of the flute-player' was certainly one of the most skilled mosaicists of his time. His work can be recognized in the following three sites: the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius (Khirbet el-Mukhayyat, Pls 1-3)¹⁰, the Chapel of Martyr Theodore (part of the so-called 'Cathedral Church complex' in Madaba, Pls 4-5)¹¹, and the Upper Chapel of the Priest John (in Wadi 'Afrat, nearby Mount Nebo, Pls 6-7)¹².

The depiction of the human figures at the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, shows a detailed and specialized work (Pls 2-3). The size of tesserae varies in different parts of the mosaic; tiny stones are used for the facial features, long black tesserae are used for creating the contour-lines, large square tesserae are used for body and clothes and the largest tesserae are used for the background. The artist is using a wide range of colors, in different tints. This enables him to create smooth and gradual changes of tone as part of his method of creating an illusion of volumes. The figures are naturalistic and depicted in a variety of gestures, with appealing proportions and convincing anatomy and movement. The artist achieves this by avoiding frontal depictions and using foreshortening in a manner that corresponds to the various gestures of the human body. He makes an accurate use of the black contour line, which is made of elongated tesserae and at times becomes just a few millimeters thin. Furthermore, the line is used as volume-marker and is sensitive to the natural forms of joints and muscles as well as forms that are entangled around each other and create an illusion of three-dimensionality. A good illustration is provided by the depiction of hands, grasping objects firmly. The same effect is created by clothes, like the method of creating the opening of the sleeves. The artist pays much attention to details such as fingers and toes and marks even the white fingernails.

A special technique is applied for the creation of an illusion of three-dimensionality of limbs: the

¹⁰ Piccirillo 1992, 152-165, Figs 201-215.

¹¹ Piccirillo 1992, 116-117, Figs 96-101, 109-115.

¹² Piccirillo 1992, 166-175, Figs 216-233. Stylistic similarities between the Upper Chapel of Priest John and the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius had already been noticed by Piccirillo, who interpreted the similarities as a result of these mosaics being produced by the same team; Piccirillo 1992, 174.



Pl. 1. *The Church of The Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, nave mosaic (After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 202)*



Pl. 3. *The Church of The Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, nave, detail (After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 205)*



Pl. 2. *The Church of The Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, nave, detail (After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 206)*



Pl. 4. The Chapel of The Martyr Theodore (After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 109)



*Pl. 5. The Chapel of The Martyr Theodore, detail
(After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 96)*



*Pl. 6. The Upper Chapel of The Priest John, nave
(After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 230)*



Pl. 7. *The Upper Chapel of The Priest John, nave, detail*
(After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 223)

limbs are divided into sections, usually two, and usually at the points of joints, such as the knees and elbows. At least three different tones of pink are applied for creating the color of the skin. The gradual tonality is given one direction in the one section, and exactly the opposite direction in the section next to it. At the same time, there is no visual break in the linear inlay direction of the tesserae between the sections. The change is only of color. The result is a convincing illusion of three-dimensionality of the human body.

Anatomy of naked body-parts is also marked both by linearity and gradual color tonality. Also bodies covered with clothes are treated in a manner that stresses the anatomy underneath: the folds of tunics fall from the waist down in a three completing triangular forms. The artist repeats these motifs with variation that creates visual richness and does not bore the eye.

Analyzing each human figure within the different medallions, the figures show such a consistency in morphology, that one artist must have produced all of them. If other craftsmen were involved in the production of this floor, they were working on other elements of the mosaic, either the animal-figures, the geometric designs that surround the depiction, or the vine-motif and the plain background.

The mosaic at the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius preserved also an inscription that preserved both the name of the commissioner as well as the date of completion of the work. It reads: 'At the time of the most holy and most saintly Bishop John, Your holy place was built and finished by its priest and paramonarius, Barichas, in the month of November of the time of the sixth indiction...' (A.D. 557)¹³. At the eastern end of the southern aisle appears a dedicatory inscription mentioning the three women who presumably donated for the work of decorating the Church: 'O Saint Lot, receive the prayer of Rome and Porphyria and Mary, your servants'¹⁴.

At the Chapel of Martyr Theodore, the work of this artist is recognized mainly through the figure of the flute-player, which is also one of the few human figures that survived in the main field of this mosaic (Pl. 5). Although the figure is smaller in dimensions than those at the Church of Lot and Procopius, it is still possible to recognize similar morphological characteristics; different size of tesserae are used in different areas of the body and elongated black stones are used for the contour and details. The volumes of the body, three dimensionality of and foreshortening is used in the same way. Recognizable is the typical form of muscle of the arm closest to the viewer, and also here, despite the smaller dimensions, smooth changes in color and gradual tones create a convincing illusion of a naturalistic representation.

The mosaic at the Chapel of Martyr Theodore preserved the following inscription: 'At the time of our most pious and most holy Bishop John, there was built from its foundations, covered by a roof, paved with mosaics and finished the most holy place of the glorious martyr, Theodore, in the month of September at the time of the eleventh indiction in the year 457' (A.D. 562)¹⁵.

The third example of a mosaic in which production 'the artist of the flute-player' participated, is at the Upper Chapel of the Priest John (Pl. 7). Also here, the same methods are used for creating the figures and effects of volumes: small tesserae are used for the faces, larger ones for the rest of the body, clothes

¹³ Piccirillo 1992, 164.

¹⁴ Piccirillo 1992, 165.

¹⁵ Piccirillo 1992, 117.

and background, and special elongated tesserae are used for the creation of the outline. Proportions and gestures are convincing in their naturalism and the artist is avoiding frontality. Three-dimensionality of limbs is created by gradual tonality of color and by forms entangled around each other, such as the scarf around the body of the hunter in Fig. 7 and the convincing depiction of hands grasping of objects and foreshortening of the feet. A variation in comparison to the earlier floor is in the depiction of tunics, which folds are not composed of triangular forms.

Like in the two former examples, the mosaic at the upper chapel of the Priest John preserved an inscription as well: 'At the time of the most pious and most beloved by God, Bishop John, the holy place was renewed and finished, by the zeal of the priest, John. It was finished in the month of August in the thirteenth indiction...' (A.D. 565)¹⁶. A second inscription reads: 'For the salvation of, and as a present of Your servant Sergius, [the son] of Stephen, and Procopius [the son] of Porphyria, and Rome, and Mary and Julian, the monk'.¹⁷

The technical and stylistic similarities in the production of the human figures in all three mosaics demonstrate that they were all made by a single artist. It still does not mean that he was the only mosaicist who produced these mosaics – it is still possible that other craftsmen created the animal figures, plant motives and other elements in the decoration. The inscriptions do not state the name of the artist, but they do preserve valuable information such as the date of completion of the work and the bishop who commissioned them. A comparison of the dates shows that 'the artist of the flute-player' was active shortly after the middle of the sixth century (557-565). It is conspicuous that he worked for one commissioner, Bishop John of Madaba. This may raise the question whether he enjoyed a permanent position within the entourage of that bishop. The secondary inscriptions that mention the donors reveal that it were partly the same people who were donating for both projects: two women named Rome and Mary, and a woman named Porphyria, who donated herself to the decoration of the Church of Lot and

Procopius and her son, in the case of the Upper Chapel of the priest John. That the same donors as well as the same bishop were involved in the commission of the work creates an impression of an integrated, small community with a firm social network. It is clear that this artist enjoyed great prestige and he did not have to go far to search for work: all the projects in which he was involved are concentrated in an area of a few kilometers from one another.

'THE ARTIST OF THE GAZELLE'

The work of this artist may be recognized in the following sites: the Church of the Lions (Umm-al-Rasas, Pls 8-9)¹⁸, the New Baptistry Chapel (Memorial of Moses, Mount Nebo, Pl. 10)¹⁹, and the Theotokos Chapel (Memorial of Moses, Mount Nebo, Pls 11-12)²⁰.

The work of this artist is characterized by a strong linearity and strong contrasts. He uses no graduation of color and relatively large fields are filled up with one and the same tint. This artist creates figures that despite their flatness are convincing in their naturalism with but a limited range of colors and very simple means. A good example is the figure of the gazelle (Pl. 9). It is made with only five colors: black, brown, yellow, white, and two lines of green. A strong contour line in black marks the main figure of the animal, but this line is not even; this artist was a virtuous in using thickness and dominance of line for the creation of illusion of volume. This is well illustrated by the black contour line that begins in the mouth and gets thicker as it follows the back line and ends at the tip of the tail. The line is interrupted by the horn and ear, which creates an illusion of hiding, and therefore of three-dimensionality. It continues again to create the back of the hind legs and the line of the belly. The interruption of line by the foreleg creates again the same effect of hiding and illusion of volume. Each leg is formed by two lines, a black back line and a front brown line. This very difference in color already creates an illusion of volume, but the effect of naturalism is achieved by the sophisticated linearity. At the top of the front left leg, for example, both lines embrace the muscle and gradually reduce their distance until they touch each other. They then separate again in two places along the leg, in order to create the joints. The gaps depicting the joints are being filled with a lighter color. By this, the artist grasps the lightness and fragility of the gazelle's

¹⁶ Piccirillo 1992, 174.

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ Piccirillo 1992, 236, Figs 338-343, 372-379.

¹⁹ Piccirillo 1992, 150, Figs 194-197.

²⁰ Piccirillo 1992, 151, Fig. 200, detail: 173.



Pl. 8. *The Church of the Lions, Altar mosaic* (After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 338)



Pl. 9. *The Church of the Lions, Altar mosaic, detail*
(After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 340)

legs. Anatomy is also marked by lines as main tool; this is well illustrated by the white body lines that create an illusion of foreshortening. The line is used as a sensitive tool that marks the most essential characteristics of the animal and in fact manipulates the beholder's eye to create an illusion of a naturalistic figure. The effectiveness of this artist's work lies to a great extent upon the familiarity of the viewer with the real animal. We can almost see the movement of the tail and feel the alert cautious in which the gazelle nibbles on the leaf.

The inscription that was preserved in this mosaic mentions the date of completion of the work and the bishop who commissioned it: 'At the time of the most pious Bishop Sergius this holy temple was completed in the month of Desius of the seventh indiction...' (A.D. 574 or 589)²¹.

²¹ Piccirillo 1992, 236.



Pl. 10. The New Baptistery Chapel (After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 197)



Pl. 11. The Theotokos Chapel (After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 200)



Pl. 12. *The Theotokos Chapel, detail*
(After Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 173)

The mosaics from the New Baptistery Chapel and the Theotokos Chapel are both from the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo. Although made by the same mosaicist, they were not produced contemporaneously; the inscription at the New Baptistery Chapel reads: 'With the help of our Lord Jesus Christ the construction of the holy church and the baptistery was completed under the most pious Bishop Sergius and the most-beloved priest and *econom*, Martyrius, in the fifteenth indiction of the year 492' (A.D. 597)²². The inscription at the Theotokos Chapel reads: 'O Creator and maker of all things, Christ our God, the entire work of the Theotokos was finished with the permission of our holy father, Bishop Leontius, by the exertion and pains of Martirius and Theodore, priests and abbots'²³. Bishop Leontius of Madaba succeeded the above-mentioned Bishop Sergius and was in office between 603-608, which means that this mosaic was produced during this primacy.

Both mosaics include elongated panels with animals and plants (Pls 10-11). Although the figurative details in the New Baptistery Chapel had been

partly destroyed, enough had been preserved to recognize the same technical and stylistic characteristics that were described at the Church of the Lions. The gazelle that survived at the left end of the panel at the Theotokos Chapel is almost identical to the one from the Church of the Lions.

From the inscription evidence it appears that 'the artist of the gazelle' was active at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century. Like 'the artist of the flute-player', he also worked in the service of bishops and although his geographical range was wider (Um al-Rasas is some 30 km away from Madaba), he still worked within the limits of the area of the Madaba bishopric. Like in the case of 'the artist of the flute-player', we may assume that 'the artist of the gazelle' enjoyed great prestige, and although we cannot tell for sure that he enjoyed a permanent position in the entourage of the bishop, the fact that he stayed working in the service of two succeeding bishops might support this assumption. It seems that 'the artist of the gazelle' specialized in certain representations, and was particularly fond of the figure of the gazelle. He often produced panel-depictions, and it seems that he produced these panels without intervention of other mosaicists. Unfortunately, the Church of the Lions, which contains the largest of the three mosaics, is too damaged to enable a good analysis of its complete artistic components. Also the mosaics in the vicinity of the panels in the memorial of Moses did not survive to a degree that makes such an analysis possible. Had this material survived, it could help us determine whether 'the artist of the gazelle' worked alone or with another craftsman, with whom he might have formed a workshop.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the analysis presented focuses on a limited range of material, it illustrates how morphological characteristics may be used as a tool for identification of individual mosaic artists. To the art historian this embodies already a purpose in itself. However, this tool opens a whole range of new investigation possibilities. It enables to determine the geographical range in which an artist was active

²² Piccirillo 1992, 150.

²³ Piccirillo 1992, 151.

and his professional preferences, not only in stylistic, but also in iconographic terms. That the preserved material includes also inscriptions is most valuable as it provides reliable information such as the date of completion, therefore indicating the span of time in which the two artists were active, and the main commissioner behind each project.

Both artists seem to have been leading figures within their craft and worked on behalf of the successive bishops of the city of Madaba. The artist called here 'the artist of the flute-player' was active in the area of Madaba and Mount Nebo in the middle of the sixth century. The other artist, 'the artist of the gazelle', was active during the second half of the sixth until the beginning of the seventh century in the area of Madaba, Mount Nebo and as far as Umm-al-Rasas.

The distribution of the work of both artists is clearly within the limits of the bishopric of Madaba and it seems that they worked exclusively in the service of the bishop of that city. This does not rule out the possibility that other mosaicists worked for the same bishop at the same time on other projects and perhaps even on a different part of the same project, but until now the material does not indicate that these artists necessarily

worked in a workshop-construction. In order to trace a workshop or a group of craftsmen who are working together permanently on different projects, a wider range of investigation is necessary. These initial identifications are a first step in the investigation of this fascinating subject²⁴.

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²⁴ The plates in this article have been reproduced with kind permission of Father Michele Piccirillo.

Book Reviews

ERICA CRUIKSHANK DODD, *Medieval Painting in the Lebanon*, Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004 (Sprachen und Kulturen des Christlichen Ori-ents 8), 450 pp.; ISBN: 3-89500-208-9.

Since the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990, archaeologists and art historians have been catching up with uncovering the country's cultural heritage. Especially its medieval Christian art was terra incognita to scholars, but today the rediscovery of sanctuaries decorated with wall paintings is in full swing. The present monograph is the result of Erica Cruikshank Dodd's pioneering work in this field. Her long stay in Beirut allowed her to inventorize the painted monuments in the mountains of Lebanon and Syria, and after her retirement she dedicated herself to publishing the results of her research. Her first book dealt with the wall paintings of the Monastery of St Moses the Ethiopian near Nebk in Syria (*The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi. A Study in Medieval Painting in Syria* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2000). Complementing this publication, *Medieval Painting in the Lebanon* furnishes an excellent insight into the surprisingly rich artistic heritage of the indigenous Christian communities on both sides of the Lebanese mountain chain from the eleventh to the thirteenth century.

The borders of northern Lebanon coincide more or less with those of the County of Tripoli (1104-1289), with a mixed Christian and Islamic population. The most important local Christian communities were the Maronite, Byzantine Orthodox (Melkite), and Syrian Orthodox (West Syrian). Judging from the age of the surviving sanctuaries and mural paintings, the indigenous Christians benefited fully from Latin rule. Examples of this artistic revival have, however, only been found in village churches and remote monastic settlements. Cruikshank Dodd suggests that the churches in cities such as Beirut and Tripoli were painted at the time, including churches used for the Latin rite, but nowadays all traces have been erased (p. 16). Paintings found during the excavation of a small church in Beirut, which are now in the National Museum in this city, confirm her theory (cat. no. 21). Unfortunately, the poor state of these representations is typical of the majority of the murals in situ. Few painting programmes have come down to us in their entirety, and what is left is still endangered. In churches such as that of Mar Saba in Eddé Batrun (cat. no. 15), only fragments dispersed over the walls remain, while the complete programme in the Church of Mar Tadros in Bahdeidat is in severe need of restoration (cat. no. 19).

Cruikshank Dodd's publication is not the first book on this subject, but it is the most elaborate. In 1997, Father Youhanna Sader published his *Painted Churches and Rock-cut Chapels of Lebanon* (Beirut: Dar Sader). His indefatigable search for forgotten mural paintings deserves our full respect, but his art-historical interpretations are arguable, and the quality of the color plates is disappointing. Two years later, Levon Nordiguan and Jean-Claude Voisin published *Châteaux et Eglises du Moyen Age au Liban* (Beirut: Editions Terre du Liban), with excellent photographs and concise but useful information. Compared to these books, the present monograph offers a more detailed, systematic discussion of the church buildings and their art set in their historical context. As for the numbers of decorated churches discussed, Sader lists twenty-two sites, and Nordiguan and Voisin twenty-nine, while Cruikshank Dodd's monograph treats twenty-six monuments. This difference can be explained from the fact that she has omitted several sites with simple geometric and floral paintings which were mentioned by her predecessors. Furthermore, in the course of a few years, the number of discoveries has increased; with an average of about two new findings a year, the list is steadily growing, and therefore it is predictable that the author's inventory is already incomplete. Indeed, by the end of 2005 several new sites had been found, the most spectacular discovery being the murals in the Church of saints Sergius and Bacchus near the Monastery of Kaftun (see the contribution of Nada Hérou in this volume of ECA). This implies that we must regard this book as an indispensable and detailed interim study on a subject that will undoubtedly attract broad attention in the future.

Chapter I is dedicated to a historical overview of the Latin presence in the Tripoli area, the local Christian communities, economic factors, and the position of Tripoli as a center of learning. Unfortunately the number of historical documents on the churches in question is limited. A few decorated sanctuaries are discussed by the seventeenth-century Maronite patriarch Stephan ad-Dwaihi, who gives dates for the murals in the Church of Mar Charbel in Ma'ad (A.D. 1243; cat. no. 18) and that of Mar Saba in Eddé Batrun (A.D. 1261; cat. no. 15). From the inscriptions on the wall paintings themselves, no information can be derived other than the names of the saints and scenes involved. Some are in Greek, others in Syriac, and in a few cases Latin words have been added, but Arabic, the language most commonly spoken by the indigenous inhabitants and used for the dedicative inscriptions in Deir Mar Musa in Syria, is absent. Chapter II deals with the architecture of the relatively small church buildings, while in Chapter III the iconography of the scenes and saints represented is discussed

and considered in its broader art-historical context. The choice of themes is greatly indebted to Byzantine art, but there are some differences affiliating the art of Lebanon with that of other communities on the eastern peripheries of the Byzantine Empire, e.g. the Copts and the Armenians. Irrespective of the ecclesiastical denomination, there is often a Deisis-vision in the apse, below which frontally depicted apostles or church fathers are rendered. Equestrian saints were very popular and must have been represented in the majority of the churches. As for the style, the subject of Chapter IV, the author subdivides the murals into four artistic schools: Cappadocia (A); Cyprus and Byzantium (B); Syrian Orthodox (the 'Syrian Style') (C); and European influence (D), illustrating the multiform character of church decoration in the County of Tripoli. There are wall paintings painted by Byzantine, mainly Cypriot, artists, or local artists trained abroad, e.g. in the Church of Mar Phocas in Amiun (cat. no. 1) and other churches in the mainly Melkite area to the southeast of Tripoli. Other murals display formal characteristics proper to the art of Lebanon and West Syria, e.g. the painting programme in Bahdeidat (cat. no. 19). A complication with this local group, the style of which has been labeled the 'Syrian Style', is that the author links them to the Syrian Orthodox community, whereas nowadays all the churches in question are Maronite. This raises questions about the alleged importance of the Syrian Orthodox presence in the County of Tripoli. In the eyes of Kamil Salibi, the West Syrians were newcomers, not to say unwelcome intruders, who had fled from their easterly homeland because of the Mongol assaults in the second half of the thirteenth century ('The Maronite Church in the Middle Ages and its Union with Rome', *OC* 42 (1958), 92-104). As a matter of fact, only in two cases, at most, are there indications that these sanctuaries were in Syrian Orthodox hands. The first one is the Monastery of Qannubin, which was the West Syrians' headquarters in the Qadisha Valley, but on their expulsion from the area in 1488 it was taken over by the Maronites (cat. no. 26; p. 399). The second building is the Church of Mar Tadros in Bahdeidat, which is mentioned in a Syriac manuscript stating that deacon Na'aman was ordained as its Syrian Orthodox priest in 1256 (p. 20). Even if we take this denomination of the church in Bahdeidat as fact, we cannot conclude that other churches with murals displaying the same style as in Bahdeidat were also of the West Syrian denomination. As a consequence, the 'Syrian Style' was not necessarily a 'West Syrian Style'.

In the final chapter, Chapter V, all decorated sites are catalogued, arranged more or less from north to south, with a short introduction to the buildings, and in some cases historical data, detailed descriptions of the scenes, transcriptions and translations of the inscriptions, conclusions about iconography, style and date, and bibliography. Each paragraph is preceded by a plan of the church, while drawings and black and white photographs can be found after the text. For practical reasons, the colour plates are placed after Chapter IV.

The question of how accurate the descriptions are requires some comment. First of all, it should be borne in mind that in many cases the deplorable and fragmentary condition of the murals hinders thorough analysis. This implies that other observers may have diverging opinions on severely damaged or

unrestored scenes. A striking example of this is the decoration on the west side of the northern pier in the Church of Mar Phocas in Amiun (cat. no. 1; Pls 1.2-3, 1.27). It was decorated twice, the second layer being applied directly onto the first, which shines through the later image at several points. This mixture of colours and fragmented shapes is puzzling, the more so because the surface is rather dirty. Cruikshank Dodd interprets this decoration as a possible Baptism, covered over by the temptation of a saint by a demon (pp. 82, 104, 161-162). On the other hand, Nordiguian and Voisin describe these scenes as '(...) la représentation du Baptême au-dessus d'une image de la Vierge' (their p. 364, colour plates on p. 286). Their analysis seems to be the correct one; on closer inspection, the 'demon' observed by Cruikshank Dodd has a halo, and it makes more sense to suppose that this figure was the Child held by the Virgin on the oldest layer. It goes without saying that this problem can only be solved by conservation.

A second remark concerns some obvious mistakes and contradictions. Today little is left of the paintings in the Church of Sayyidat ar-Rih near Enfé (cat. no. 8). There is a fragmented equestrian saint, interpreted by Cruikshank Dodd as 'riding St. George'. The reason for this identification is the alleged white colour of his horse (p. 225). However, colour plate XXVII clearly shows a red-brown horse, rather than a white one. This raises stirrings of doubt about St George being represented here, but the author has a further argument: 'Underneath this figure were little fishes swimming in blue waves, an indication that this was St. George.' Thus the scene would have been identical to that of St George rescuing the youth from captivity in, for example, Bahdeidat, showing fish under the belly of the horse (p. 343). There is no photographic proof that this well-filled sea ever existed near the rider in Enfé, but a representation of this kind is indeed part of the Baptism, located in a large shallow niche in the south wall, to the right of the western entrance (Pls XXVII, XXIX). This is, however, also the spot where Cruikshank Dodd erroneously situates the horseman in her description ('immediately to the right, on the south wall of the church near the entrance.'), whereas the plan depicts the correct situation: the horseman can be found halfway along the south wall (Fig. 8.1 on p. 224). It appears that the author has mixed up her notes and memories. A similar confusion resulting from inaccuracy occurs in the case of the paintings in Deir Hamatoura near Kousba. On p. 93 the author compares them to murals in Greece and Cappadocia, leading her to date Hamatoura's art to the late eleventh century or very early twelfth century. On p. 210, however, she opts for the second half of the twelfth century. It should be remarked that the poorly preserved fragments in Deir Hamatoura are difficult to analyze, but according to my own observations several painting programmes can be distinguished. Some medieval elements were obviously repainted later on, e.g. the scene described as the Transfiguration, which is actually the Blessing of the Apostles, and the Virgin of the Last Judgment.

Another questionable matter is the author's attribution of other paintings as well to the eleventh century, thus to the pre-crusader period. One example is the angel's head in the Monastery of Qannubin (cat. no. 26; Pl. 26.1). It is dated from the eleventh or early twelfth century (p. 399), but the

linear approach of the rendering of the face is so close to that of thirteenth-century wall paintings in Lebanon that such an early estimate is open to arguments. The same goes for other supposedly eleventh- or early twelfth-century representations, e.g. those in the Cave Chapel of Sayyidat ad-Darr, Deir Mart Shmuni, and the Church of Sayyidat Haqlé (cat. nos 13, 11 and 25; pp. 89-90).

Despite such minor shortcomings, this book is an indispensable source for those interested in the study of medieval art of the Eastern Mediterranean and Byzantine area. It gives proof of the existence of a flourishing indigenous artistic tradition which was nourished from abroad, forms a solid basis for further discussions, and contributes to a better understanding of the position of indigenous Christians living in crusader territory, and their contacts with others.

Mat Immerzeel

Zuzana SKALOVA, Gawdat GABRA, *Icons of the Nile Valley*, Cairo: Egyptian International Publishing Company – Longman, 2003, 285 pp.; ISBN: 977-16-0588-7.

Icons are a subject that appeals to a broad public. Although the publications dedicated to this matter are countless, they mainly focus on East European and Greek art, while the attention to icons from Egypt is often limited to the few surviving pieces from the Early Coptic, i.e. pre-Islamic, era, and to the collection of the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St Catherine in the Sinai. Since the 1980s, specialists from the Netherlands have played a pioneering role in the restoration and study of the many icons in Coptic churches, monasteries, and the Coptic Museum. Scholars from Leiden University have focused on documenting the icon collection of this museum, which resulted in a catalogue (P. van Moorsel, M. Immerzeel, L. Langen, *Catalogue général du musée copte. The icons*, Cairo 1994). No less important was the establishing of a restoration project, under the direction of Zuzana Skalova, which aimed at the training of Egyptian restorers and the conservation of icons in the Coptic Museum and churches in Cairo. From the Egyptian side, these activities were instigated and stimulated by the archaeologist Gawdat Gabra. He and Skalova have joined forces to produce the first publication, dedicated entirely to Coptic icons, from the Early Coptic period to the present. It reflects twenty-five years of intensive involvement in the preservation of Egypt's Christian cultural heritage, and provides detailed information on this subject for both scholars and interested lay people.

Part I, written by Gabra, furnishes the general background. Chapter I is dedicated to the history of the Coptic Church, and includes some remarks about the architecture of churches, and their rituals, as well as a general introduction to Coptic art. The author limits himself, however, mainly to the pre-Islamic period, thus creating a lacuna; most of the icons in Coptic churches are medieval or from the Ottoman period, and one would have expected more attention to be paid to artistic developments

during these periods. Chapter II focuses on the role of icons in the Coptic Church. It starts with the portraits in Ancient Egypt and the mummy portraits from the Roman period, which the author considers forerunners of icons (p. 27). According to Gabra, there was an Egyptian tradition of sacred images; he repeats the common opinion in the research that traditional motifs served as prototypes for Christian representations, e.g. the Virgin feeding the Child is held to have been inspired by the iconography of Isis suckling Horus. Apparently, the Byzantine iconoclast movement (726-843) did not affect the Copts. Stories about the intentional destruction of icons in the nineteenth century, or the burning of icons to cook the Myron, the holy oil, are generally apocryphal. Other subjects discussed are the meaning of icons in the Coptic Church as it would appear from the writings of historians and theologians, the importance of miraculous icons, and the use of icons in the liturgy. In Chapter III, the appreciation and production of modern icons is treated. The Coptic Church founded its own school under the direction of the painter, Isaac Fanous, who created a national style and iconography based on Ancient Egyptian and Coptic traditions. These characteristic neo-Coptic icons predominate in the modern churches in Egypt, but also those abroad built for the Coptic 'diaspora'.

Zuzana Skalova is the author of Part II, which deals with the history of icon painting in the Nile Valley. Chapter I starts with Roman and Byzantine Egypt, discussing the functions of funerary portraits, the pagan predecessors of Christian icons, and the role of relics, though surprisingly little attention is paid to the Early Coptic examples. The author's experience in the restoration of icons comes to the foreground in her discussion of local traditions, materials and workshop practices. Furthermore, subjects such as the liturgical sources, hagiography, the categorisation of icons, and their models are addressed.

In icon studies, the extended collection of icons in the Monastery of St Catherine is extremely important (Chapter II). This monastery is a Byzantine/Greek Orthodox enclave in Egyptian territory, and although it owns hundreds of icons from the Early to the Late Byzantine period, only a few can reservedly be labelled as Coptic (Appendix, nos. 2, 3, 7). The medieval icons of Egypt have hardly been the subject of thorough research until now, and this makes Chapter III one of the more interesting parts of this publication. The gradual Islamisation of the Nile Valley also affected the Copts; Arabic became their spoken language and came more and more to replace Coptic and Greek in writings. Most of the medieval icons preserved are present in the churches of Old Cairo, the former Roman fortress Babylon, and a traditional Christian stronghold. When compared to the style of contemporary wall paintings, many of these icons betray a Byzantine rather than a Coptic background. An interesting case study is the *khurus* screen in the Church of St Mercurius (Abu Sefein). It is true that the icons on this screen date from the eighteenth century, but Skalova argues that these have replaced thirteenth-century icons; today the surviving images of the four evangelists and an archangel are scattered throughout monasteries in the Wadi al-Natrun. In other matters, this book raises more questions than it answers. There is, for example, no solid argumentation for the datings suggested. The list of medieval icons in the Wadi

al-Natrun, Cairo and the Greek Orthodox collection in Alexandria is useful, but it is incomplete (pp. 118-119). Why is the impressive thirteenth-century Crucifixion icon in Deir al-Surian not included (p. 173, Pl. 6c)? One may presume that it was omitted from the list because of its supposed Syrian-Palestine origin, but this is certainly not a foregone conclusion. Then again, another contemporary icon from Deir al-Surian, which is in the Coptic Museum, is indeed included (cat. no. 18). Represented on its obverse are saints Sergius and Bacchus, and on the reverse the head of a saint (George?). Egypt is said to be the origin of this piece, but on closer inspection it displays craftsmanship similar to that of the Crucifixion icon, e.g. in the rendering of the faces. Such observations demonstrate that the learned discussions on Egypt's medieval icons are yet to start.

Chapter IV discusses icons from the Ottoman era (1517-1798). In Cairo, icon production revived in the eighteenth century, with Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yohanna Armani al-Qudsi as the leading artists. The former was a Copt, the latter an Armenian who had emigrated from Jerusalem. Although their style and iconography do not differ very much, Yohanna's icons betray his Armenian background; he may have been inspired by, for example, illuminated manuscripts kept in the Armenian Monastery of St James in his home town (p. 138). Chapter V focuses on the production of icons in modern times, i.e. after the French occupation of Egypt (1798-1801). In the nineteenth century, the impact of the important Palestinian workshops is felt. The dominant 'Coptic' master of this period is Anastasi al-Rumi al-Qudsi ('Anastasius the Greek from Jerusalem'). His name suggests that he was an immigrant working for the Coptic Church, and indeed his works of art betray his training in a Palestinian Melkite artistic environment. The chapter ends, again, with the modern school of icon painting founded by Isaac Fanus.

The catalogue includes thirty-five examples of icons in churches and monasteries, or in the collection of the Coptic Museum. Some of these objects, in particular the extremely interesting medieval pieces, have never been reproduced in full colour, thus it is all the more regrettable that the printing quality of this book is very poor. Reproductions of the seven icons from St Catherine's Monastery presented in the Appendix can also be found in other publications, but in the case of the icons from the Church of Abu Sefein in Old Cairo, for example, this is really a missed opportunity.

In conclusion, this publication offers a broad overview of Coptic icons and their contexts through the ages, but the integration of the two parts leaves a lot to be desired. Both authors discuss subjects such as Late Antique funerary portraits and the modern school of icon painting, while information about other medieval and post-medieval Coptic works of art (e.g. illuminations and wall paintings) can be found scattered throughout Skalova's chapters instead of in Gabra's introduction to Coptic art. Whereas Gabra describes the seventeenth and eighteenth century as a period of economic and social chaos (p. 9), Skalova is more positive about this period, in particular as regards the position of the Christians of Egypt (pp. 120-123). After all, icon production boomed again in the eighteenth century, and this causes us to believe that the socio-economic position of the Copts had altered positively in this period. It is to be hoped that this highly informative book will be reprinted with the printing quality that it deserves, but some editorial adaptations could also be helpful to guide non-specialised readers in the intriguing world of Egypt's Christian art.

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